



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

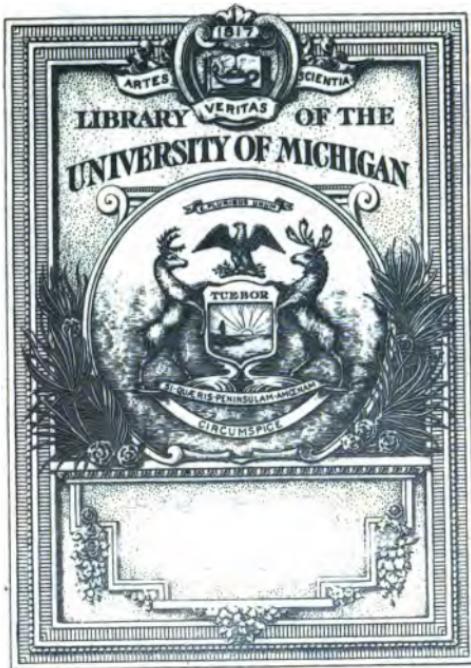
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

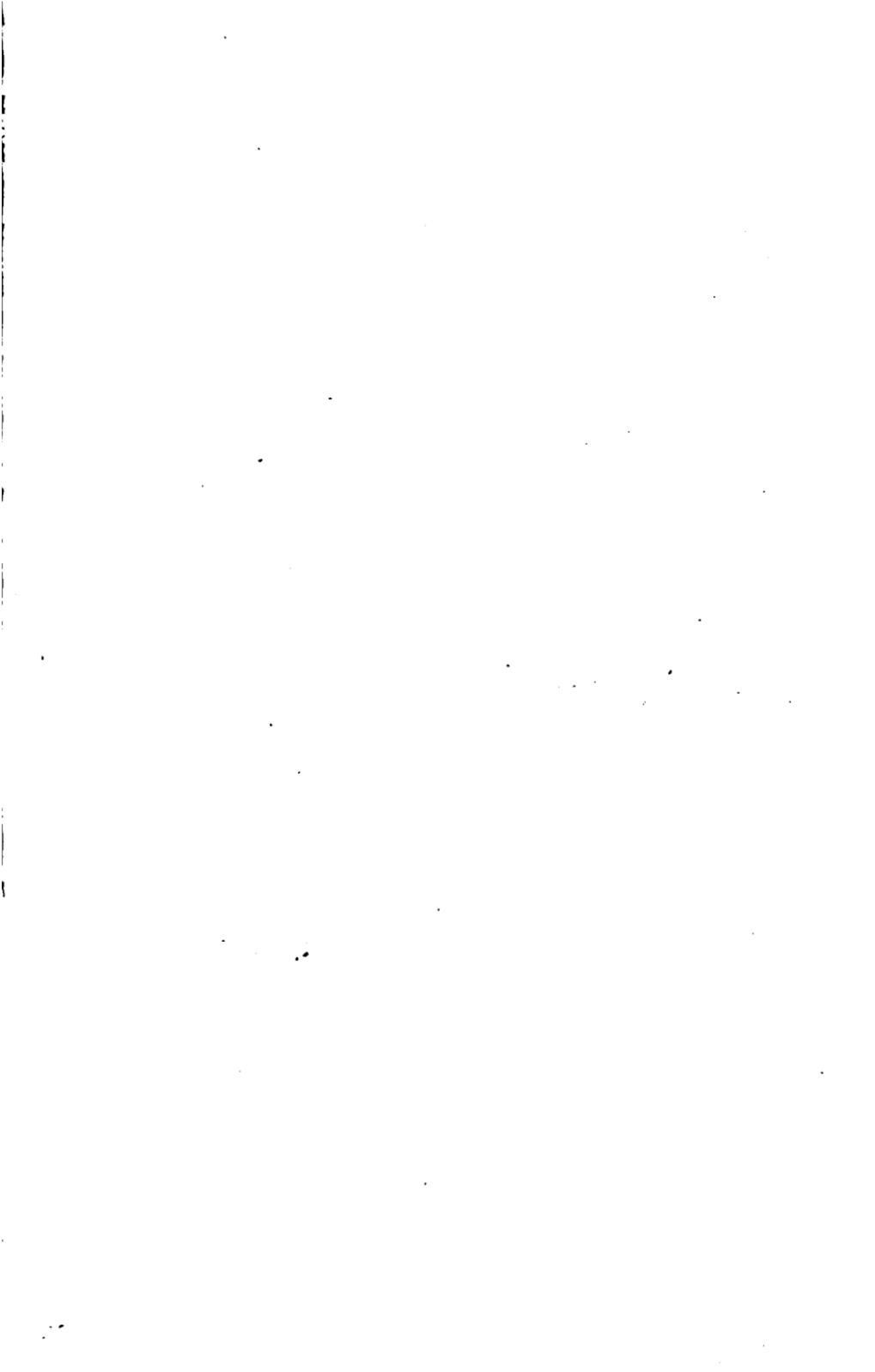
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>







849.7  
388  
cop.2



# HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

A STUDY IN THE TEACHING  
OF THE MOTHER TONGUE

BY

ROLLO WALTER BROWN  
PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION  
IN WABASH COLLEGE



CAMBRIDGE  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
1915

**COPYRIGHT, 1915  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS**

**All rights reserved, including that of  
translation into foreign languages**

## PREFACE

SOON after I began teaching English nine years ago, my acquaintance with several French textbooks on composition led me to believe that it might be profitable to study the manner in which the French deal with the entire problem of learning to write. In 1910 Wabash College granted me a year's leave of absence for the prosecution of such a study; and in 1912 I found it possible to carry out my original plans. Accordingly I went to France and devoted the academic year to visiting classrooms in both the primary and secondary school systems, to holding conferences with teachers and other persons interested in education, and to such complementary investigation as seemed important. My observations were made in schools for boys.

The current programmes of study in the different subjects taught in the French secondary schools have already been translated into English; and some parts have been translated repeatedly. Moreover, the volume of *Instructions* issued in 1909 for the guidance of secondary teachers has been translated and published by the British Board of Education as a supplement to the programmes. So far as I know, the present programmes for primary schools have not been translated. I have made my own translations of all programmes and documents, and of all illustrative passages except in one or two instances mentioned in footnotes.

A study based so largely on first-hand observation is possible only through the kindness and the coöperation of a great number of educational officers and a still greater number of teachers. To the many who assisted me so

generously that my labor was not only fruitful but singularly enjoyable, I desire to extend my heartiest thanks. I am especially indebted to M. Guist'hau, formerly *Ministre de l'Instruction publique et des Beaux-Arts*, for letters that opened the way to the different *académies* of France, and for information of many kinds; to M. Liard, *vice-recteur de l'Académie de Paris*, M. Lyon, *recteur de l'Académie de Lille*, M. Payot, *recteur de l'Académie d'Aix*, and M. Joubin, *recteur de l'Académie de Lyon*, for authorization to visit schools in their respective *académies*; to M. Gustave Lanson, *professeur à la Sorbonne*, for many valuable suggestions about beginning my work; to M. Henri Dupré, *professeur au Lycée Carnot*, Paris, M. Henri Alline, *professeur au Lycée Ampère*, Lyon, M. Paul Marie-Cardine, *professeur adjoint au Lycée Janson de Sailly*, Paris, M. Faye, *professeur à l'École Jean-Baptiste Say*, Paris, and M. Mercier, *instituteur public*, Paris, for their very substantial assistance in my examination of the written work of different classes of pupils; to M. Kuhn, *professeur à l'École normale d'instituteurs*, Paris, for certain information concerning the study of the mother tongue in the normal schools; to M. J. Bezard, *professeur au Lycée Hoche*, Versailles, and M. Lucien Lavault, *proviseur du Lycée Gassendi*, Digne, for unexampled thoughtfulness about numerous matters of importance; and to M. Charles Wagner, for his stimulating interest.

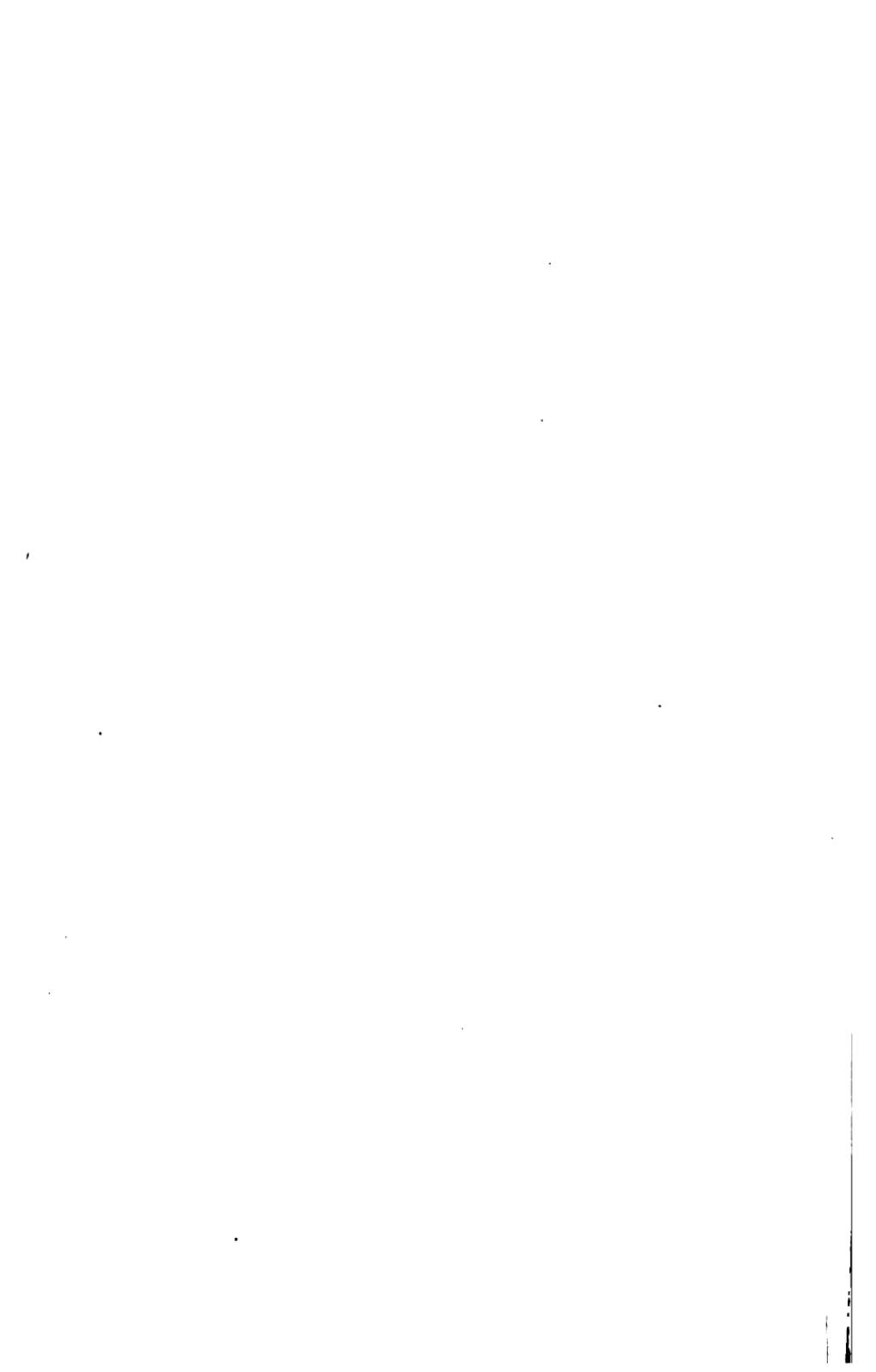
I am likewise deeply indebted to Professor G. L. Kittridge, Dean L. B. R. Briggs, and Professor G. P. Baker, of Harvard University, for their encouragement and good counsel when I was preparing to make this study; to Professor Raymond Weeks, of Columbia University, for many letters of introduction; to Professor F. E. Farrington, of Columbia University, not only for the profit I derived from reading his books on French education before I went to

## PREFACE

v

France, but also for personal suggestions; to Professor N. W. Barnes, of De Pauw University, and Professor J. S. Kenyon, of Butler College, for reading parts of the manuscript; to Dr. C. J. Masseck, of Washington University, for his unfailing interest and searching criticism; to my colleagues, Dr. Francis Daniels and Mr. Harold Hawk, for generous assistance of many kinds; and finally, to my wife, not only for aid with notes and manuscript, but also for her sustaining inspiration.

R. W. B.



## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER I

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	3

### CHAPTER II

THE COURSES OF STUDY IN THE MOTHER TONGUE . . . . .	II
I. THE BEARING OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM . . . . .	II
II. THE PROGRAMMES . . . . .	14

### CHAPTER III

COMPOSITION . . . . .	46
I. THE FRENCH ATTITUDE TOWARD COMPOSITION . . . . .	46
II. PRELIMINARIES TO COMPOSITION . . . . .	48
A. ENLARGING AND ORGANIZING THE VOCABULARY . . . . .	48
B. DICTATION . . . . .	57
III. MATERIAL FOR THEMES . . . . .	63
A. THE EMPHASIS PLACED ON GOOD MATERIAL . . . . .	63
B. THE KIND OF MATERIAL ASSIGNED . . . . .	65
C. THE PREPARATION OF MATERIAL . . . . .	75
IV. THE CRITICISM OF THEMES . . . . .	79
A. IDEALS IN CRITICISM . . . . .	79
B. THE METHOD OF CRITICISM . . . . .	81
C. THE SPIRIT OF THE CRITICISM . . . . .	83
D. ECONOMY IN GRADING THEMES . . . . .	84
V. THE WRITING AND SPEAKING IN OTHER SUBJECTS . . . . .	86
VI. SUMMARY . . . . .	89

## CONTENTS

## CHAPTER IV

<b>GRAMMAR . . . . .</b>	<b>5</b>
I. THE PREDOMINANT PURPOSE IN TEACHING GRAMMAR . . . . .	9
II. THE EARLY BEGINNING . . . . .	9
III. SIMPLIFICATION . . . . .	9.
A. IN SUBJECT-MATTER . . . . .	9.
B. IN CLASSROOM EXERCISES . . . . .	94
C. IN NOMENCLATURE . . . . .	96
IV. THE CLOSE RELATION OF GRAMMAR TO OTHER WORK . . . . .	99
A. THROUGH THE INTERNAL ARRANGEMENT OF CLASS PERIODS . . . . .	100
B. THROUGH ORAL EXERCISES . . . . .	102
C. THROUGH THE USE OF COMPLETE PASSAGES OF PROSE . . . . .	103
D. THROUGH EMPHASIS ON THE SENTENCE . . . . .	106
V. THE INFLUENCE OF THE INDUCTIVE METHOD . . . . .	107
VI. HISTORICAL GRAMMAR . . . . .	110

## CHAPTER V

<b>READING AND LITERATURE . . . . .</b>	<b>114</b>
I. WHAT THE PUPIL READS . . . . .	114
II. HOW THE PUPIL READS . . . . .	118
A. IN THE LOWER GRADES . . . . .	119
B. IN THE UPPER GRADES: EXPLICATION OF TEXTS .	123
1. THE METHOD OF EXPLICATION . . . . .	123
2. AN EXAMPLE OF EXPLICATION . . . . .	129
3. THE VALUE OF EXPLICATION . . . . .	148
III. MEMORY EXERCISES IN READING AND LITERATURE . .	149
IV. THE RELATION OF LITERATURE TO THEME-WRITING .	152

## CHAPTER VI

<b>FOREIGN LANGUAGES . . . . .</b>	<b>155</b>
I. LATIN . . . . .	155
A. CLASSROOM METHOD . . . . .	156
B. THE DOMINANT PURPOSE IN TEACHING LATIN .	159
II. THE MODERN LANGUAGES . . . . .	162
A. THE DIRECT METHOD . . . . .	163
B. THE DIRECT METHOD AND THE MOTHER TONGUE	170

## CONTENTS

ix

### CHAPTER VII

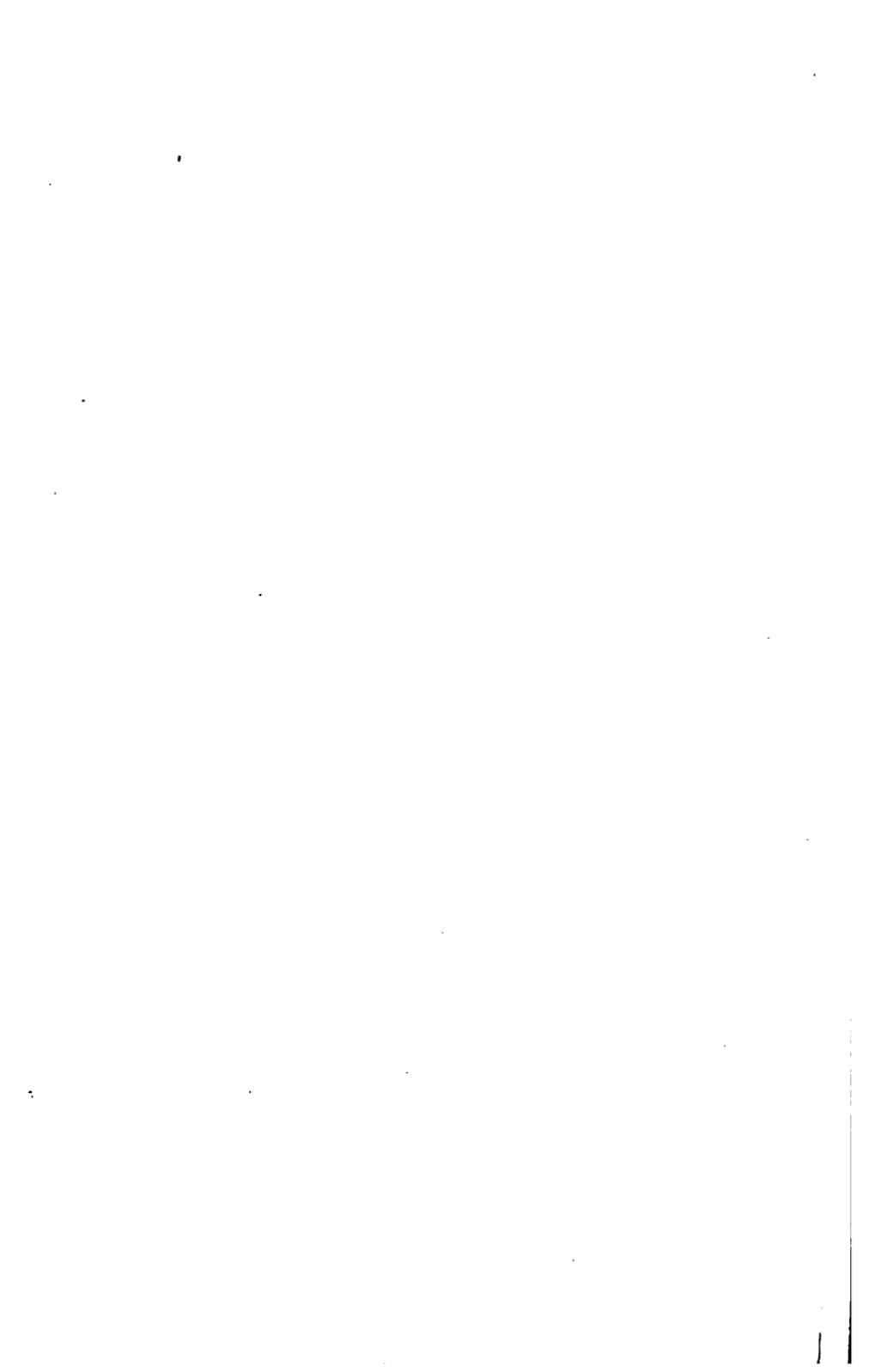
THE FRENCH BOY'S TEACHER . . . . .	174
I. THE PREPARATION OF THE TEACHER . . . . .	175
A. PREPARATION IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL SYSTEM .	175
B. PREPARATION IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL SYSTEM	179
II. THE TEACHER'S POSITION . . . . .	185
A. HIS RELATION TO THE STATE . . . . .	185
B. HIS STANDING IN THE COMMUNITY . . . . .	186
C. HIS LIFE WITHIN THE SCHOOL . . . . .	187
D. SALARIES . . . . .	191
E. PENSIONS . . . . .	194
III. PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TEACHER . . .	196
A. CONSCIENTIOUSNESS . . . . .	197
B. ENTHUSIASM . . . . .	198
C. ABILITY TO QUESTION . . . . .	199
D. SKILL IN INCIDENTAL TEACHING . . . . .	201
IV. THE TEACHER AND HIS SCHOOL . . . . .	203

### CHAPTER VIII

ORGANIZED LANGUAGE TRADITION . . . . .	208
I. ORGANIZED TRADITION IN FRANCE . . . . .	208
II. THE LACK OF ORGANIZED TRADITION IN AMERICA .	210
III. ADJUSTMENTS NECESSARY TO ORGANIZED TRADITION .	212
A. IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM . . . . .	213
B. IN PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE . . . . .	216
C. IN FINDING AND PREPARING TEACHERS . . . .	229
D. IN THE TEACHER'S POSITION . . . . .	237
IV. THE FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTER OF OUR NEEDS . . .	239
APPENDIX . . . . .	243
INDEX . . . . .	255



**HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS  
TO WRITE**



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

THIS book records a study of the French schools that was made for the light it might shed on the teaching of English in America. In addition to the reasons that justify comparative studies in classroom methods generally, one other holds in this case. The mother tongue is at once a "subject" and a part of every other educational activity. Helping schoolboys and college students to write well is not merely a matter of teaching courses; it is a problem that is intricately related to our entire educational scheme. We shall never make any real progress simply by deciding between much reading and little in a given semester, between Hawthorne and George Eliot in a certain year in the high school, between daily themes and weekly themes, or between one style of oral composition and another, important as these individual matters may be. Neither shall we find any happy solution in the mere addition of one or two assistants to the Department of English. We must first go beyond all these perplexing details and see the problem in its entirety. We must understand, moreover, all that should be done in order to make the teaching of English effective. Then, after we have gained a clear view of the large outlines of the problem, and after we have decided upon a general method of procedure, we must work out the details in accordance with our larger view. Nothing of very great consequence will be brought to pass if our efforts are scattered and antagonistic or if we spend all of our spare time in trying to say something caustic about what somebody else

#### 4 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

in our own field has done or has proposed to do. There must be greater singleness of direction in our work. It was in the hope that I might help in some small measure to bring about a more fruitful organization of effort in America that I conceived and carried out the plan of observing how pupils learn to write in another country.

To be sure, we must work out our own American problems. We cannot hope to adopt bodily any very large part of the system or the methods employed elsewhere. Yet when we bear in mind the diversified educational interests that the newness of our country has forced upon our attention during the past few decades, it need not be any reflection on our efforts if we wonder whether an older country might not still be able to teach us many things about developing a boy's ability to express himself. We may be led to see where changes could be made to advantage, even though the other country suggest no way of making any change; we may see in some instances, perhaps, how the change ought to be made; and in a wide variety of instances, we are certain to see where our own judgment has been corroborated by the practice of teachers who have been working quite independently of us and our peculiar needs. We cannot fail to go about our work with surer confidence if we know how the teachers in another country have gone about theirs.

France affords special advantages for a study of this kind. To begin with, the French boy has for a long time borne the reputation of being a good writer; and any reasonably thorough inquiry into the matter will convince one that the reputation is well merited. There may be some who doubt whether the French boy writes as well to-day as he did twenty or thirty years ago — although I found few French educators who believe there has been any noticeable deterio-

## INTRODUCTION

5

ration among boys of the same native ability and social class — yet according to American standards, he writes well. If a great many specimens of written work done in different parts of France form a basis for judgment, he writes with greater grammatical correctness, sharper accuracy of thought, surer and more intelligent freedom, and greater regard for good form and finish, than does the American boy of the same age.

Secondly, whatever skill the French boy may possess must be attributed in large part to generations of training. For two centuries, at least, the French people have placed emphasis upon the importance of good speaking and writing. It is now almost a century and a half since Rivarol made his striking declaration, "That which is not clear is not French." With the extension of both the primary and secondary schools in the nineteenth century, this ideal ceased to be that of the few and became that of the many. The old theory, superstitiously accepted in America, that through a combination of the French boy's superior intelligence and some sort of magic in his native language he has been able to express himself with an ease and accuracy impossible in other tongues, cannot be taken seriously. The French boy can scarcely be said to be the superior of the American boy in intelligence, and although his mother tongue has some well-known advantages, especially in matters of brevity and neatness, it has so many shortcomings that it cannot be regarded as a medium of miraculous character. Moreover, the French language is not easily learned well, even by the native French mind; and merely for purposes of accepted everyday use, it is not mastered without much systematic study. It seems, then, more reasonable to suppose that the training which enables barbers, cobblers, messenger boys, autobus conductors,

## 6 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

grocers, and waitresses to explain questions of grammatical and rhetorical usage, has also helped to provide them with a conscience which in large measure holds them to accurate speech and writing.

If further evidence on this point were required, it might easily be found in the progress made by American boys who live in France and study English, as well as French, in the public schools. In the course of the investigation recorded in the following pages, I sought out the parents of a large number of these boys and questioned them, as well as the boys themselves, concerning the results attained. Almost without exception, both the pupils and the parents were enthusiastic in their responses. The boys had caught some of the French classroom spirit of work; and the parents marveled. They explained in some instances, as though it were rather a serious reflection on the schools, that pupils had to work harder than they did in America; but they invariably added that with the increased work came greater skill in both French and English. Their observation of specific cases only corroborates reason and the study of large numbers of pupils by schools. No one, in truth, who remains in the atmosphere of the French classroom for a year or two can continue to believe that pupils' ability to write is wholly, or even chiefly, a simple matter of predestination. The schools must have their due.

Just now there is another important reason why a study of this kind in France ought to be profitable to us in America. This reason grows out of the new political and educational life of the French people since 1870. Since this period of the Franco-Prussian War, there has been an inclination in our own country to look upon France as a nation whose achievements belong wholly in the past.

This attitude I encountered several years ago when I first informed some friends that I hoped to spend a year in the French schools studying certain educational problems. They expressed surprise that one should look upon France as having anything to contribute to present-day life. And their attitude represents a widespread misapprehension among a part of the American people. They regard the France of to-day as a nation made up chiefly of milliners, ladies' tailors, long-haired artists, and "decadent," absinthe-drinking poets who live a life of sensuous ease, glorying in the nation's past and forgetting its present and its future. Quite naturally they ask what we intense, matter-of-fact Americans can learn from such a people. This view, unfortunately, disregards many of the Frenchman's most characteristic qualities, his most firmly fixed ideals, and above all, his tremendous progress in the last forty years. Smarting under the humiliation of defeat at arms, he has been busily engaged in regenerating his nation in many important respects. The immediate presence of such a powerful enemy as the German Empire has served as a stimulus to the closest industry.<sup>1</sup> And while we have been shouting from the housetops about our bigness, our liberty, the magnificence of our university "plants," the glory of our schools, and the size of our educational meetings, France has been very diligently, very modestly working out many of the problems that in America remain largely unsolved and in some instances almost untouched.

The present, therefore, is an opportune time for such a study. The changes that have been taking place in France have resulted in a more effective scheme of education, and they cannot be said to have destroyed anything

<sup>1</sup> This Introduction, as well as most of the later chapters, was written before the outbreak of the present European war.

## 8 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

that the spirit of the times would justify keeping. There has been no "breaking down" of French culture, as we are occasionally asked to believe, but only a well-considered, logical effort to adapt culture to the conditions that have arisen in France, as elsewhere, because of new economic and social demands.

Just now we are in a position to see, then, what the French have discarded as faulty or relatively unessential, what they are still doubtful about, and what has met with their approval so thoroughly that they have held to it firmly, even though it be old. If it appears that I dwell chiefly upon things that merit approval, rather than upon the doubtful or the faulty, it need only be borne in mind that my chief aim is to point out what seems to contribute to successful teaching. Weaknesses, even absurdities, have existed and still exist in French education; but in the present study, most of these would be irrelevant.

One word of caution: We should not be misguided into believing that French educational affairs are in a chaotic state simply because French educators sometimes cry out against one another and one another's methods. In the first place, no organization as large as a nation's body of teachers can be free from disagreement if the members are inquiring and conscientious. This we may see by looking at ourselves. Any unprejudiced foreigner who might chance to read the American newspapers received at any European capital during the Christmas holidays would be convinced by the accounts of our numerous educational meetings that it would be impossible for us to continue our work of training the youth of the land unless many violent reforms were made immediately in almost every part of our educational system. Yet after the holidays, our schools go on, as we all know, very much as they did before the

meetings. There must always be some of this diversity of opinion on matters of importance; and so in France. In the second place, the French teachers are sincerely very modest about their attainments, and often think some one else must be able to do a given task better than they can, simply because they themselves see how far their own work falls short of perfection. Again, because the Frenchman enjoys exercising his ability to reason clearly and sharply, he is sometimes led to discuss, with much spirit, questions that are of relatively little moment. As a matter of fact, many of the heated arguments on educational questions in France to-day are due chiefly to one quality of the French character: the Frenchman has the ability — more than any other European, I believe — to stand off and look at himself as others see him. He can take the point of view of other people and criticise himself in order that he may improve in some particular respect. Thus it comes about that just now the Frenchman is looking at himself from the point of view of the Englishman, and is encouraging outdoor sports among the school pupils. He is, despite the influence of long, firmly-established traditions, reasonably open-minded — at least in educational matters; and he stands ready to learn not only by the observation of other people, but by the analysis of his own experience. I have sometimes thought him less charitable toward himself and his fellow countrymen than toward the people of any other nation.

In the chapters that follow, the chief aim is to show how the educational system that has reached its highest perfection under the quickened French life of the past half-century serves as a powerful means of fortifying the language tradition that was fostered in a smaller way in the earlier schools. It is not the purpose of the book to give an his-

## 10 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

torical view of the teaching of the mother tongue, but rather to point out how the accumulated experience of French educators is applied to-day. Accordingly, the chapters consider (1) the full outline of the course of study in composition, grammar, and literature; (2) the carrying out of the different parts of this course in the classroom; (3) the influence of the teaching of foreign languages on the pupil's skill in using his native tongue; (4) the French boy's teacher; and (5) the results of the methods employed in perpetuating good speech and writing, and the possibility of attaining some of these results in America.

I have striven for the larger kind of accuracy and truth. It is not possible, I am aware, to generalize with certainty on most wide subjects; but in this instance much of the difficulty is removed by the fact that the French educational system is closely organized. Whatever faults it may have, it has at least the merit of sending the entire country in the same educational direction. Generalizations are, therefore, a little less hazardous. Of course, some parts of the book are impression; they profess to be nothing more, and need not be accepted if the reader believes the facts presented justify other conclusions. I have made no effort to reduce everything to documentary evidence and tables of statistics. Instead of giving merely the framework of programmes and courses, with occasional comment, I have sought to reveal the everyday practice of teachers — the practice that, after all, shapes the pupil's habits of mind — and to suggest the point of view, the moving spirit, of the nation's educational life.

## CHAPTER II

### THE COURSES OF STUDY IN THE MOTHER TONGUE

#### I. THE BEARING OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

IN order to understand the following programmes of study, it is necessary to keep in mind two distinct characteristics of the French educational system.<sup>1</sup> The first of these is the close, highly centralized organization. All educational affairs are under the direction of one office, which is presided over by the Minister of Public Instruction. The Minister is a regular member of the national cabinet, and is, therefore, not likely to continue in office for a long period; but the *directeurs* who have charge of the different grades of education<sup>2</sup> — and they, it must be said, really carry on the work of the office — usually hold their positions for a long period of years. The important divisions of the country for carrying on educational administration are the *académies*, areas usually larger than our largest counties but scarcely so large as our Far-Western congressional districts. Of these there are sixteen<sup>3</sup> in all, and each is presided over by a *recteur*, who is at once the head of the university in the

<sup>1</sup> One can gain a fairly good notion of French educational organization simply by leafing through the *Annuaire de l'Instruction publique* referred to in the Appendix. For an exhaustive treatment of the subject, see Professor F. E. Farrington's *French Secondary Schools* and his *The Public Primary School System of France*, also listed in the Appendix. For a brief historical view, see Chapter VII of Monsieur A. L. Guérard's *French Civilization in the Nineteenth Century* (The Century Company).

<sup>2</sup> Directeur de l'Enseignement supérieur; Directeur de l'Enseignement secondaire; Directeur de l'Enseignement primaire.

<sup>3</sup> Seventeen when one counts Algeria.

## 12 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

*académie* and the general superintendent of all the lower schools. Under him are a number of inspectors who devote their time to visiting schools, reporting upon the conditions they find, and making recommendations for promotions. And finally, under the inspectors are the rank and file of the teachers. Now the Minister, assisted by his *directeurs* and surrounded by a great body of educational and legal advisers, keeps in close and constant touch with the *recteur* in each of the different *académies*; and the *recteur* in turn, through his *académie* inspectors and special inspectors for lower primary schools, reaches every school within his jurisdiction. Moreover, in order that the same general standards may be maintained throughout the country, a number of inspectors-general, the direct representatives of the Minister's office in Paris, travel about in the different *académies* and report on conditions as they see them in the large. Such an educational scheme, profitable as a field of study for anyone who is interested in questions of school administration, is significant for us because it gives the teaching of the mother tongue a close unity. One can study the programmes and know that they represent the whole country; and one can easily understand why a given programme is so perfectly organized.

The second distinct characteristic of the school system is the dual organization of all instruction below the university. Instead of an elementary school with a high school built upon it, as we have in America, the French have two distinct systems running parallel from the lowest grades to the end of the school courses. It is true that they call one of these *primaire* and the other *secondaire*, but the terms are used in a sense altogether different from our *primary* and *secondary* and should not be confused with them. Roughly speaking, the French secondary instruction, though inevi-

tably changing somewhat in its character, corresponds to our so-called liberal culture training in America. The boys who study in the secondary schools are those who want as well-rounded an education as they can get before becoming candidates for the bachelor's degree, or they wish to prepare for more advanced study in one of the faculties of the university. The primary instruction, on the other hand, is intensely practical in character, corresponding in the upper grades to the work in our vocational or manual training high schools. The boys who pursue their studies in the primary system are ordinarily those who wish or need to be able to earn a livelihood as soon as possible, or who desire to prepare themselves for the higher schools of arts and trades or for one of the primary normal schools. Quite naturally, there is a social division as well. In fact, it would be scarcely too much to say that the essential distinction is social. The son of the lawyer, or physician, or university professor, or well-to-do business man, is likely to approach school training in a spirit of greater deliberation than is the son of a drayman or plasterer, and he may want to acquire knowledge of subjects that would not be of any great utilitarian benefit. He goes, therefore, to the secondary school, the *lycée*. The son of the blacksmith, the carpenter, the gardener, or the shopkeeper has not the money to pay the small tuition fee charged in the secondary school, he perhaps will be required to go to work as soon as he has fulfilled the requirements of the law at the age of thirteen,—the end of the middle division of the primary course,—and his interests, growing out of the interests of his family, are mostly utilitarian. He goes, therefore, to the primary school. It is true that the course in the secondary school system makes provision for the transfer of boys from the primary system at the age of nine or ten; yet a very small

## 14 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

number make the change. The practical difficulties of going to a secondary school are frequently too great, and there is, I found in talking with pupils, a mild disdain for pupils who are being educated in the other system, whichever it happens to be. As a result, the division is rather sharply drawn, and it modifies, we shall see, the course in the mother tongue.

### II. THE PROGRAMMES

The programmes should be studied carefully. They have been worked out in such detail, and they are followed by teachers with such fidelity, that they constitute a real beginning for the study of classroom practice. Perhaps a few observations will make them more immediately clear. The programmes for secondary schools were adopted in 1902 and became effective the following year. Before that time there was a pronounced feeling that the secondary schools were not meeting the educational needs of the day. An attempt was made, therefore, to readjust the programmes in the various subjects, and to find a proper balance between Classical and "modern" education. All recitation periods, too, were fixed at one hour, instead of one and two. In the readjustment, the work in the mother tongue was newly emphasized and the course was more definitely fixed than it had been under the older programmes. The present primary school programmes were adopted in 1887, modified in 1890, in 1894, in 1897, in 1898, and again in 1909.

It should be borne in mind that the course in the secondary system, that is, in the *Lycée*, though no longer when measured in years than the American course through the high school, is long enough, in days and hours and the work actually done, to carry a student almost to the end of his sophomore year in an American college. During the

last year, since the student devotes his time to a special course in either philosophy or mathematics, he receives no systematic training in the mother tongue. In the primary course of study, which may be regarded roughly as a year shorter than the secondary course, the student receives systematic training up to the very end of the last year. It may be said, then, that the French boy has regular instruction in his own tongue from the day he enters school till the end of a period corresponding to the freshman year in our colleges. Of course, if he then goes to any of the higher special schools or to the university, he is almost certain to have a great deal more than this; but this much at least he is sure to have.

It should be observed, too, that the instruction in the mother tongue, even to the end of both the primary and secondary courses, includes not only literature, but grammar and composition. In other words, the mother tongue is treated as one subject made up of different parts — as it always should be treated — and not as two or three or four different subjects. This does not mean that one part of the subject is regarded as being just as important as another, or that one part should receive the same relative consideration throughout the course. As a matter of fact, one of the striking features of the programmes is the skillful manner in which some divisions of the subject are made to increase steadily in importance up through the school course while others just as gradually decrease. But there is no complete putting aside of grammar for composition, or composition for literature, simply because some teacher or group of teachers may prefer composition to grammar, or literature to composition.

The unity of the course is revealed also in the close continuity of the work from year to year. If the pupil remains

## 16 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

in one school system, or changes from one to the other early in his school career, there is no break in methods or ideals as there often is with us when a pupil enters high school, or as there is certain to be when he leaves high school and enters college. Continuity is looked upon as being so essential to the most effective work, that teachers of the different grades in a *lycée* are required to meet regularly and discuss what they are doing, so that there will be no untouched topics, no unbridged chasms, and, on the other hand, no needless overlapping. In this manner every teacher of the mother tongue knows with reasonable definiteness what a boy has accomplished before he enters a given class and what will be expected of him after he goes from it to the next one above. And all the teachers, through this close knowledge and through discussions of the exercises, compositions, and readings suitable to the different grades, are enabled without sacrificing their individuality to give common direction to their work.

In reading the programmes, one should not fail to note that the system of numbering the grades in the secondary course is different from that employed in American schools. Thus Class Seven does not mean the seventh class from the beginning as in our grades, but the seventh class from the end; and Class One does not refer to a beginning class, but to the last class (save the special year of mathematics or philosophy).

From the beginning of Class Six to the end of Class Three, the secondary course is in two divisions. Division A centers about the Classics, and Division B about the modern languages. From the beginning of Class Two to the end of the programme, the course is in four divisions: A (Latin-Greek), B (Latin-Modern Languages), C (Latin-Science), and D (Science-Modern Languages). The study

of the mother tongue is essentially the same in the different divisions.

In translating the programmes of study I have included all footnotes that accompanied the original text. Any notes that I have added are enclosed in brackets. In order to render comparison less difficult, I have made the sub-headings in the earlier years of the secondary course conform in arrangement and type to the corresponding subheadings in the primary course. I have also indicated the approximate age of pupils in all instances where this information was not included in the original.

## 18 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

### PRIMARY SCHOOL SYSTEM THE LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOLS BEGINNING COURSE

(From five to seven years of age. Ten hours a week.)

*Reading:* First exercises in reading.—Letters, syllables, words.

*Penmanship:* First elements.

*French language:* Combined exercises in language, reading, and penmanship, preparing the way to orthography.

(1) Oral exercises:

Very familiar questions designed to lead the pupils to express themselves clearly; the correction of faults of pronunciation or local accents.

(2) Memory exercises:

Recitation of very short bits of poetry.

(3) Written exercises:

Beginning dictations, first of one word at a time, then of two or three, and then of very short sentences.

(4) Very simple readings by the teacher, which are to be listened to and retold by the pupils.

**SECONDARY SCHOOL SYSTEM****BEGINNING CLASSES**

(Age of pupils, five to seven years. Ten hours a week.)

*Reading:* First lessons.*Penmanship:* Methodical, progressive exercises.*French language:*

## (1) Oral exercises:

Questions about very familiar matters, designed to lead the pupils to express themselves clearly. The correction of faults in pronunciation.

Very simple exercises in the language: vocabulary and short sentences.

The recitation from memory of poems that are very simple and very easy to understand, and that have been explained in advance.

## (2) Written exercises:

First, the copying of short texts previously explained, thus preparing the way for the study of orthography.

The writing of some texts of the same kind from dictation.

(3) The reading aloud of short pieces before the class and the retelling of them by the pupils.

**PREPARATORY CLASSES****FIRST YEAR PREPARATORY, OR TENTH CLASS**

(Age of pupils, seven or eight. Nine hours a week.)

*Reading:* Reading regularly, accompanied by brief explanations of the meanings of the most difficult words.

Elementary book of selections <sup>1</sup> from various authors.

*Penmanship:* Systematic, progressive exercises.*French language:* First notions about the different parts of speech: noun, article, adjective, and verb.

<sup>1</sup> The use of a book of selections is obligatory in the preparatory and elementary classes.

## 20 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

### PRIMARY PROGRAMME (continued).

#### ELEMENTARY COURSE

(From seven to nine years of age. Ten hours a week.)

*Reading:* Reading regularly, with explanations of words.

*Penmanship:* Writing in large, medium-sized, and small characters.

*French language:* First notions, given orally, of the noun (number and gender), adjective, pronoun, and verb (the first elements of conjugation).

The formation of the plural and the feminine; the agreement of the adjective with its noun, and of the verb with its subject.

Idea of the simple proposition.

(1) Oral exercises:

Questions and explanations, especially in the course of the reading lesson or in the correction of exercises. Interrogations on the meaning, the use, and the orthography of the words used in the text read. — Spelling of difficult words. Oral reproduction of short sentences read and explained, then of stories or parts of stories told by the teacher.

(2) Memory exercises:

Recitation of poems of a very simple kind.

(3) Written exercises:

Graded dictations in spelling and orthography.

Short grammatical exercises of a great variety of forms.

Some dictations relative to alcoholism, its ugliness, and its dangers.

**SECONDARY PROGRAMME** (continued).

First elements of conjugation. — *Etre* [*to be*]. *Avoir* [*to have*]. — Regular verbs (active voice).

Formation of the feminine and the plural.

Agreement of the adjective with the noun, of the verb with its subject.

Analysis<sup>1</sup> reduced to its simplest form.

Nature of words: gender and number.

Agreement of the adjective with the noun that it limits or qualifies.

Subject of the verb.

Exercises in analysis, usually oral, but sometimes written.

(1) Oral exercises:

Questions and explanations growing out of the different kinds of classroom work, especially the reading lesson or the correction of written exercises.

Questions on the meaning, use, and orthography of words in the text read. The spelling of difficult words.

The oral reproduction of short sentences previously read and explained, and later, of stories or parts of stories told by the teacher.

(2) Memory exercises.

Recitation of poetry of a very simple kind, always explained in class in advance (meanings of the words and sentences).

(3) Written exercises:

Graduated exercises in spelling (on the blackboard or in the exercise-book).

Short dictations of pieces previously read and explained, each piece to be complete in itself and interesting.

The pupil's attention is to be directed to punctuation.

<sup>1</sup> [The French *analyse* is usually a combination of sentence analysis and a very simple kind of parsing.]

## **22 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE**

### **PRIMARY PROGRAMME (continued).**

Written reproduction (on the blackboard or in the exercise-book) of some sentences that have previously been explained.

Composition of short sentences from elements given by the teacher.

#### **(4) Exercises in analysis:**

Grammatical analysis (usually oral, sometimes written).

Separation of the proposition into its essential terms.

**(5) Reading aloud by the teacher, twice a week, of selections designed to interest the pupils.**

**SECONDARY PROGRAMME (continued).****SECOND YEAR PREPARATORY, OR NINTH CLASS**

(Age of pupils, eight or nine. Seven hours a week.)

**Reading:** The same programme as in the preceding year. Elementary book of selections<sup>1</sup> from various authors.

**Penmanship:** The same programme as in the preceding year.

**French language:** Ideas on the different parts of speech: noun, article, adjective, pronoun, verb, and adverb.

The simplest rules of agreement.

Analysis reduced to its simplest form.

Nature of words: gender, number, person, tense, and mood.

Idea of the simple proposition; analysis of its essential elements,— subject, verb, and complement of the verb (direct or indirect).

Attribute of the subject.

Exercises in analysis, usually oral, but sometimes written.

(1) Oral exercises:

The same programme as in the preceding year.

(2) Memory exercises:

The same programme as in the preceding year. The teacher may assign pieces that have been dictated after having been read and explained in class.

(3) Written exercises:

The same programme as in the preceding year.

Short exercises on the French language.

Composition of short sentences from given elements.

<sup>1</sup> The use of a book of selections is obligatory in the preparatory and elementary classes.

## 24 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE PRIMARY PROGRAMME (continued).

### MIDDLE COURSE

(From nine to eleven years of age. Ten hours a week.)

*Reading:* Reading regularly, with explanations.

*Penmanship:* The ordinary running hand.

*French language:* Elementary grammar. — The parts of speech. — Conjugations. — Notions of syntax.

General rules of the past participle. Notions of the families of words: derived words and compound words. — Principles of punctuation.

(1) Oral exercises:

Elocution and pronunciation.

Interrogations on grammatical subjects.

Reproduction of stories told by the teacher; summaries of selections read in class.

(2) Memory exercises:

Recitation of fables, of short poems, and of some selections in prose.

(3) Written exercises:

Dictations chosen, as far as possible, from classic authors, and without pursuit of grammatical difficulties.

Exercises in invention and in the construction of sentences; homonyms, synonyms.

Correction by the pupils of one another's dictations and exercises.

Reproduction in the pupils' own words of selections read in class or at home, and of stories told by the teacher.

**SECONDARY PROGRAMME (continued).**

**NOTE:** The teacher may, according to circumstances, adopt suggestions from the programme for the next higher class.<sup>1</sup>

**ELEMENTARY CLASSES****EIGHTH CLASS**

(Age of pupils, nine or ten. Seven hours a week.)

**Reading:** Reading regularly, accompanied by brief explanations of the meanings of the most difficult words.

Elementary book of selections <sup>2</sup> from various authors.

Reading with explanation, either of a piece to be committed to memory, or of a dictation given as an exercise, or of a passage chosen from the book of selections.

**Penmanship:** Running hand, vertical, or English style.

**French language:** Elementary grammar.

Study of the parts of speech.

Complete conjugation of the regular verbs (active, passive, and reflexive voices).

The most common irregular verbs.

The most simple notions of syntax.

Principles of punctuation.

<sup>1</sup> Here are some examples of exercises, which, of course, it will be necessary to vary:

Distinguish the nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc., used in sentences which the teacher writes on the blackboard or asks the pupil to read from the textbook. Change the tenses of the verbs in a story; change the person. The pupils should be drilled in finding and, if possible, in classifying a number of nouns, adjectives, and verbs which relate to a given order of ideas. Require the opposites of given adjectives; the same exercise on the abstract nouns which correspond to the adjectives.

These exercises are well suited to the Ninth Class, Eighth, or Seventh.

<sup>2</sup> The use of a book of selections is obligatory in the preparatory and elementary classes.

## **26 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE**

### **PRIMARY PROGRAMME (continued).**

First exercises in drawing up material on subjects that are very simple and best known to the pupils. Choose sometimes for a subject the consequences of alcoholism.

#### **(4) Exercises in analysis:**

Grammatical analysis, chiefly oral.

Logical analysis, limited to fundamental distinctions.

#### **(5) Reading aloud by the teacher, twice a week, of selections taken from classic authors.**

**SECONDARY PROGRAMME** (continued).

**Analysis:** More complete study of the proposition; functions of words; subject, verb, complements of place and time; attribute of the subject; determinative complement.

Exercises in analysis, usually oral, but sometimes written.

(1) Oral exercises:

Reproduction of stories told by the teacher, and summaries of pieces read in class.

(2) Memory exercises:

Recitation of fables, simple pieces of poetry, and occasional pieces of prose.

The teacher may assign pieces that have been dictated in class.

(3) Written exercises:

Graduated exercises in spelling (on the blackboard or in the exercise-book).

Short dictations of pieces previously read and explained, each piece to be complete in itself and interesting.

Varied exercises on the French language.<sup>1</sup>

Short exercises in French composition, consisting of descriptions of familiar objects and living things that have been seen by the pupils, of reproductions of stories studied in class, and of narratives based on pictures.

**SEVENTH CLASS**

(Age of pupils, ten to eleven. Seven hours a week.)

**Reading:** The same programme as in the preceding year.

Elementary book of selections<sup>2</sup> from various authors.

**Penmanship:** The same programme as in the preceding year.

<sup>1</sup> See the suggested exercises for the preceding year.

<sup>2</sup> The use of a book of selections is obligatory in the preparatory and elementary classes.

**PRIMARY PROGRAMME (continued).****SUPERIOR COURSE**

(From eleven to thirteen years of age. Ten hours a week, approximately.)

**Reading:** Expressive reading.**Penmanship:** Running hand, oval, or "modified."**French language:** Review of grammar and syntax. Study of the proposition and the different kinds of propositions.

Functions of words in the sentence.

Principal rules relative to the use of words and the sequence of tenses.

Difficulties presented by the orthography of certain nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and irregular verbs.

Notions of ordinary etymology and of derivations.

**(1) Oral exercises:**

Continuation and development of the exercises in elocution.

Accounts of readings, lessons, walks, experiences, etc.

Exposition by the pupil of historical or literary selections that he has been asked to read and analyze.

**(2) Memory exercises:**

Expressive recitation of selections in prose and in verse, of dialogues, and of scenes, all of which are to be drawn from the [French] classics.

**(3) Written exercises:**

Dictations chosen from classic authors and without the pursuit of grammatical problems.

Exercises on the derivation and the compounding of words, on etymology, and on the application of the most important rules of syntax.

**SECONDARY PROGRAMME (continued).**

*French language:* Elementary grammar. — Review.

More complete study of irregular verbs.

The simplest rules of syntax.

Ideas on the use of tenses and moods.

Principles of punctuation.

*Analysis:* Complete study of the elements of the proposition.

Attribute of the subject and of the complement.

Principal kinds of propositions; the relations that may exist between them.

Exercises, usually oral, but sometimes written.

(1) Oral exercises:

The same programme as in the preceding year.

(2) Memory exercises:

The same programme as in the preceding year. The teacher may assign pieces that have been dictated after having been read and explained in class.

(3) Written exercises:

Graduated exercises in spelling (on the blackboard or in the exercise-book).

Short dictations of pieces previously read and explained, each piece to be complete in itself and interesting. (Avoid too many grammatical difficulties.)

Various exercises on the French language (same programme as in the preceding year).<sup>1</sup>

Short exercises in composition (same programme as in the preceding year).

Very simple letters based on everyday life.

<sup>1</sup> See the suggested exercises for the Ninth Class.

## 30 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

### PRIMARY PROGRAMME (continued).

Compositions on simple subjects; sometimes a subject **on** the dangers and the effects of alcoholism. — Accounts **of** lessons and readings.

#### (4) Exercises in analysis:

Questions of grammatical analysis growing out of difficult cases encountered in reading.

Oral exercises in logical analysis.

#### (5) Readings by the teacher, with the concourse of the pupils: literary, dramatic, and historical subjects.

**SECONDARY PROGRAMME (continued).****FIRST CYCLE****Duration: Four Years****DIVISION B****SIXTH CLASS**(Age of pupils, eleven or twelve. Five hours a week.)<sup>1</sup>**Grammar of present-day usage.****Simple exercises in grammatical and logical analysis, chiefly oral.****Exercises on the vocabulary: families of words, simple words, derivatives, and compound words.****Reading and explanation of authors.****Recitation. — The pieces to be committed to memory are by preference to be poetry.****Free reproduction, oral or written, of classroom readings and memory recitations.****Short exercises in composition.**

The rules are to be taught above all by usage. The teacher will not miss any opportunity to make clear to the pupils that they apply these rules instinctively. He will, then, constantly bring his teaching into relation with examples provided by the written or spoken language. The study of grammar will have for its object the summing up of the rules drawn from actual experience.

<sup>1</sup> [In Division A, which includes Latin and may include Greek, only three hours are devoted to the mother tongue in the first, second, and third years of this cycle, and four hours in the fourth. The programme in Division B gives a slightly more complete outline of the course than that in Division A.]

32 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE  
PRIMARY PROGRAMME (continued).

THE HIGHER PRIMARY SCHOOLS

FIRST YEAR

(Fourteen years of age. Five hours a week.)

I. *Reading and Recitation*

(Three hours a week.)

Under this title are included exercises of two sorts. Those of the first class, dealing with the short selections and insisting on detail, are designed first of all to accustom the pupil to give an exact account of what he reads and to form his diction. The others, dealing with longer selections or entire works, aim above all to give him a taste for reading.

(1) Explanation of texts; reading with emphasis and expression.

This exercise, repeated in each class, will have for its material either a collection of short pieces complete in themselves or of other passages of real literary value, chosen from one of the books which the pupils have already read and concerning which the teacher will have talked to them. The teacher will lead the pupils to disengage the essential idea of the passage; to discover the precise meaning of the words and to appreciate their appropriateness; to feel, in the measure possible, the character and the beauty of the selection. One will not neglect to make explanation of how the fragment studied fits into the plan of the complete work from which it has been taken, nor, on occasion, to give some condensed information about the life and work of the author.

The passages to be committed to memory will always be chosen from among the selections thus explained.

## SECONDARY PROGRAMME (continued).

*Authors*<sup>1</sup>

(Reading, Explanation, Recitation.)

Selections in prose and in verse from the French classics.  
(The same book of selections may be used throughout the First Cycle.)

La Fontaine: *Fables* (the first six books).

Fénelon: Selections from the fables and dialogues.

Buffon: Selected descriptions.

Stories that have been taken from the poets and prose writers of the Middle Ages and put into modern French.

Selections from the poets of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

Stories and other narratives taken from the prose writers of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

## FIFTH CLASS

(Age of pupils, twelve or thirteen. Five hours a week.)

More complete study of grammatical forms. — Syntax.

Written and oral exercises on the French language.

Reading and explanation of authors.

Recitation. — The pieces to be committed to memory are by preference to be poetry.

The pupils will be led to do home reading, which will be checked up in class.

Easy exercises in composition.

The rules are to be taught above all by usage. The teacher will not miss any opportunity to make clear to the pupils that they apply these rules instinctively. He will, then, constantly bring his teaching into relation with ex-

<sup>1</sup> Each year the teacher will select from this list the works that are to be explained in class.

<sup>2</sup> These two groups will be used again in the higher classes.

## 34 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

### PRIMARY PROGRAMME (continued).

(2) Longer readings, partly in class, partly in the study-room or at home, pursued independently or under the direction of the teacher.

These readings, sometimes purely literary, sometimes useful complements to the courses in morals, history, geography, or sciences, will be accompanied to advantage by prudent comments designed to bring out particular interests or beauties, to stimulate the intellectual curiosity of the pupils, to lead them to desire to read the work commented upon, and to fix their attention on the essential points. These comments may be followed sometimes by questions asked after the reading has been done, sometimes by conversation, in which the teacher takes notice of the impression that has been produced on the pupils, and aids them in becoming more sharply conscious of this impression, even going so far as to make for them a simple, brief summary of what they have retained.

The outline below is only a very general guide which leaves to the teacher the privilege of choosing for himself the readings best suited to his pupils.

(a) Choice of works or parts of works produced by the principal prose writers of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

(b) Selections from the great French poets.

(c) Choice of plays or parts of plays from the French drama of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

**SECONDARY PROGRAMME** (continued).

amples provided by the written or spoken language. The study of grammar will have for its object the summing up of the rules drawn from actual experience.

*Authors*<sup>1</sup>

(Reading, Explanation, Recitation.)

Selections in prose and verse from the French classics.

*Chanson de Roland*, put into modern French.

La Fontaine: *Fables* (the last six books).

Boileau: Selection of satires, and episodes from the *Lutrin*.

Racine: *Esther*.

Fénelon: *Télémaque*.

Selections from the poets of the nineteenth century.

Stories and other narratives taken from the prose writers of the nineteenth century.

**FOURTH CLASS**

(Age of pupils, thirteen or fourteen. Five hours a week.)

Reading and explanation of authors (prose and verse) with recitations based upon the reading.

In the study of the texts the teacher will give such elements of historical grammar as may seem necessary. These elements are not to constitute a regular course, and they are to be given only for the purpose of rendering more intelligible the present usage of the language.

The pupils will be led to do home reading, which is to be checked up in class.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Each year the teacher will select from this list the works that are to be explained in class.

<sup>2</sup> These home readings may be translations of the principal masterpieces of ancient and modern literatures.

## 36 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

### PRIMARY PROGRAMME (continued).

(d) Readings on the social life of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, drawn above all from memoirs and correspondence.

(e) Readings on the nineteenth century. Letters. Historical memoirs. Recollections of travel, and narratives of explorations. Selections from scientific works.

(f) Reading of some masterpieces of foreign literature.

## SECONDARY PROGRAMME (continued).

French compositions, and exercises on the French language.

*Authors*<sup>1</sup>

(Reading, Explanation, Recitation.)

Selections in prose and verse from the French classics.

Corneille: *Le Cid*.

Molière: *L'Avare*.

Racine: *Athalie*, *Les Plaideurs*.

Voltaire: *Histoire de Charles XII*.

Michelet: Historical extracts.

Stories and other narratives taken from the writers of the eighteenth century.

Selections from the poets of the nineteenth century.

## THIRD CLASS

(Age of boys, fourteen or fifteen. Five hours a week.)

Reading and explanation of authors with recitations based on the reading.

The pupils are to be led to do home reading, which is to be checked up in class.<sup>2</sup>

Readings and interrogations designed to acquaint the pupil with the great epochs in French literature.

French compositions.

Beginning with this class, an outline history of French literature is to be placed in the hands of the pupils.

<sup>1</sup> Each year the teacher will select from this list the works that are to be explained in class.

<sup>2</sup> These home readings may be translations of the principal masterpieces of ancient and modern literatures.

## 38 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

### PRIMARY PROGRAMME (continued).

#### *II. Grammar, Orthography, Analysis, and Vocabulary*

(One hour a week.)

The teacher will be careful not to devote entire class periods to didactic instructions in grammar, since such exercises weary the attention of the pupils and leave little trace in their minds. The instruction should be given by means of exercises chosen carefully by the teacher to exemplify the application of the rules.

The point is, in effect, not to make a Course in grammar, but to review the principal rules which the pupils have already learned in the [lower] primary schools, illuminating them — especially in the second year — with some notions of historical grammar. The study of the vocabulary, — that is to say, of words classified methodically, of their modifications by the use of affixes, of their grouping into families according to their etymology, — will occupy an important place. Some exercises in orthography will serve to supplement the studies in grammar and vocabulary. The teacher will not abuse grammatical analysis, which should be practiced orally, and he will frequently make oral exercises in logical analysis, contenting himself with the simplest terminology. These exercises are designed to accustom the pupils to distinguish the elements of thought. In all the exercises in French, the teacher will devote himself primarily to the actual usage of the language and will guard against subtleties.

**SECONDARY PROGRAMME (continued).***Authors*<sup>1</sup>

(Reading, Explanation, Recitation.)

Selections in prose and verse from the French classics.

Corneille: *Horace, Cinna*.Racine: *Britannicus, Iphigénie*.Molière: *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme, Les Femmes savantes*.

Bossuet: Funeral orations.

Chateaubriand: Narratives, scenes, and landscapes.

Victor Hugo: Selected poems.

Stories and other narratives taken from the writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Scenes selected from the comedy writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

**SECOND CYCLE****Duration: Three Years**

(The programme [in the mother tongue] is the same in Sections A, B, and C.)

**SECOND CLASS**

(Age of pupils, fifteen or sixteen. Four hours a week.)

Explanation and recitation of French authors.

The pupils are to do home reading, which is to be checked up in class.

In the study of the texts, the teacher will give such elements of historical grammar as may seem necessary. These elements are not to constitute a regular course, and they are to be given only for the purpose of rendering more intelligible the present usage of the language.

French compositions.

<sup>1</sup> Each year the teacher will choose from this list the authors that are to be explained in class.

**PRIMARY PROGRAMME** (continued).**III. French Composition**

(One hour a week.)

Exercises in composition of a very simple kind: definitions, descriptions, narratives, letters, reports on reading.

The teacher will not regard composition merely as a simple exercise in language, but indeed as one of the principal means of helping the pupil's thought to form itself. If reading opens the field of ideas, composition gives exercise in choosing, grouping, and expressing them. It is for the teacher a means of knowing the mental activity of the pupil, and of verifying his mental accuracy. It is important, therefore, that the subjects be adapted to the powers of the pupils, methodically graded, and often related to the readings which are to follow or precede the exercise in composition.

**SECONDARY PROGRAMME (continued).**

Readings and interrogations designed to give a knowledge of the chief French writers down to the end of the sixteenth century.

Beginning with this class, a more advanced grammar is to be placed in the hands of the pupils.

*Authors<sup>1</sup>*

Selections from the prose writers and poets of the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

*Chanson de Roland.*

Villehardouin, Joinville, Froissart, Commines: Selections.

A book of selections from Mediæval literature.

Montaigne: Principal chapters, and extracts.

Poetic masterpieces of Marot, Ronsard, du Bellay, d'Aubigné, and Régnier.

Corneille: Selected plays.

Molière: Selected plays.

Racine: Selected plays.

La Fontaine: *Fables*.

Boileau: Satires and epistles.

Bossuet: Funeral orations.

La Bruyère: *Caractères*.

Selected letters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Readings on the social life of the seventeenth century, selected from the memoirs and correspondence of that period.

J.-J. Rousseau: Selections.

Poetic masterpieces of Lamartine and Victor Hugo.

A choice from the leading historians of the nineteenth century.

<sup>1</sup> Each year the teacher will choose from this list the authors that are to be explained in class.

42 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

**PRIMARY PROGRAMME** (continued).

**SECOND AND THIRD YEARS**

(Fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen years of age. Five hours a week.)<sup>1</sup>

The programme of the second and third years remains essential respects the same as that of the first year; it comprises reading and composition, to which are to be added instruction in grammar, exercises in orthography, and oral exercises in logical and grammatical analysis.

Naturally it will be the duty of the teacher to grade the various exercises and to adapt them to the attainments of the pupils.

During these two years, and especially in the third, the importance of composition increases, and that of the special exercises in orthography diminishes. The composition, on the other hand, ought to serve at the same time as an exercise in orthography; it is important that the teacher impress upon the pupil the thought that accuracy is demanded not merely in the special compositions, but in every written exercise.

As for the work in composition, its scope should be enlarged in keeping with the development of the pupil. The teacher can profitably require him to give an account of a piece of reading, a journey, or an excursion; the description of a factory, or of occupations belonging to different seasons. He should be required to exercise his powers of observation, imagination, and feeling. One should teach

<sup>1</sup> [In the agricultural and commercial sections, four hours; in the industrial section, three hours.]

**SECONDARY PROGRAMME (continued).****FIRST CLASS**

(Age of pupils, sixteen or seventeen. Four hours a week.)

Explanation and recitation of French authors.

The pupils will do home reading, which is to be checked up in class.

French compositions.

Readings and interrogations designed to give a knowledge of the principal French writers from the seventeenth century to the end of the first half of the nineteenth century.

*Authors<sup>1</sup>*

Selections from the prose writers and poets of the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

Montaigne: Principal chapters and extracts.

Corneille: Selected plays.

Molière: Selected plays.

Racine: Selected plays.

La Fontaine: *Fables*.

Boileau: *Épîtres, Satires, Art poétique*. — Extracts from prose works.

Pascal: *Pensées, Provinciales* (I, IV, XIII, and extracts).

Bossuet: Funeral orations. Selected sermons. Extracts from miscellaneous works.

La Bruyère: *Caractères*.

Fénelon: *Lettre à l'Académie*; selections from other works.

Selected letters from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

<sup>1</sup> Each year the teacher will select from this list the works that are to be explained in class.

**PRIMARY PROGRAMME** (concluded).

him not to content himself with vague expressions, with  
and dried phrases, but to seek out the word and the ph  
which reflect his thought most accurately, and to put i  
his diction as much as possible of his personality.

**SECONDARY PROGRAMME (concluded).**

Montesquieu: *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence.* — Selections from the *Esprit des lois* and miscellaneous works.

Buffon: Selections (speeches and general views).

Voltaire: Selections from his historical writings and other prose works.

Diderot: Selections.

J.-J. Rousseau: Selections. — *Lettres à d'Alembert sur les spectacles.*

Readings on the social life of the eighteenth century, selected from the memoirs and correspondence of that period.

Poetical masterpieces of Lamartine and Victor Hugo.

A choice from the moralists of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

A choice from the principal historians of the nineteenth century.

**CLASS IN MATHEMATICS OR PHILOSOPHY**

[In this last year of the secondary course there is no systematic instruction in the mother tongue.]

## CHAPTER III

### COMPOSITION

#### I. THE FRENCH ATTITUDE TOWARD COMPOSITION

As soon as an American teacher comes into direct contact with the French educational system, he marvels at the large place writing holds in the schools and their routine life. First, it matters not in what classroom a small boy may be seen, he is never without his general notebook, in which he records all assignments, all problems, all experiments, all quotations to be learned, all geographical and historical notes and maps, as well as many special exercises; and the language he employs in this work is carefully marked and graded by the teacher. In the second place, compositions are numerous. From the time the boy is regarded as mature enough to think consecutively, he prepares compositions at regular intervals. In some classes he writes two short exercises a week; in others, one more formal piece each week; and still in others, a longer piece every two weeks with shorter exercises every three or five days. In the elementary primary schools, even up to the time the boy is thirteen or fourteen years old, the shorter themes once or twice a week seem to stand in great favor. These vary in length, usually, from a hundred and fifty to four hundred words — they are rather longer than the average American daily theme — and the less frequent, longer compositions range ordinarily from six hundred to fifteen hundred words. Then, in the upper grades, there are, in addition, many papers in history, civics, philosophy, and

R. T. L. J. M.  
French 91

literature. So it may be seen that a boy is provided with much opportunity to write. It is, in fact, scarcely an exaggeration to say that he writes all the time. In any event, his practice is so continuous that he sooner or later comes to do the work in a perfectly normal frame of mind just as he performs his other schoolday labors.

The volume of required writing, however, is regarded as less important than its quality. If a boy thinks and writes poorly, he is looked upon as an unfortunate who deserves either pity or contempt. If, on the other hand, he is able to think and write skillfully, he is held in great honor by his teachers and his classmates. And this interest in ability to write is evident outside the recitation-room. Authors of books and articles discuss the perils of the pure mother tongue as seriously as if they were dealing with a question of ethics or of grave national policy. Parents, I found when I was securing compositions for the purposes of this book, are usually desirous of preserving the written work of their children. Moreover, when pupils distinguish themselves in examinations — which in France are always largely a matter of composition — they receive prizes and public mention very much as if they were the winners of athletic trophies. Now I would not have anyone make the hasty inference that intellectual contests are substituted for athletics. The French boy loves the open just as much as the American boy does, and outdoor sports are steadily taking a larger place in school life. But the ideal of writing well has been held up before the schoolboy so long, and with such seriousness, that he attaches more importance to ability of this kind than the average American boy could at present be led to comprehend.

When so much importance is everywhere attached to ability to write, it is not surprising to find that in both the

primary and secondary school systems the course in mother tongue gives large place to systematic training composition. It is the conviction of the great body teachers, as well as the Ministry,<sup>1</sup> that work in grammar, rhetoric, and literature is in most respects lost unless contributes to the pupil's ability to give full, intelligent expression to his thought. Moreover, theories of teaching and all the proposed changes in the course of study, seem to be considered first in respect to their influence on this ability of the pupil. Expression is not the sole end, but in all the lower schools it is the primary end. And, taking the other point of view, the chief responsibility for the pupil's manner of expression rests upon the teacher of the mother tongue. As we shall see later, the writing that the boy does in history, geometry, and his other subjects is made to contribute its full share to his skill; yet upon the teacher of the native language rests the largest responsibility and the greatest burden of labor. He accepts his task as difficult, very expensive in time and energy, but extremely important. Without going into any examination of exceptional aims or of intricate personal devices, let us see what he attempts to accomplish and how he pursues his way.

## II. PRELIMINARIES TO COMPOSITION

### A. ENLARGING AND ORGANIZING THE VOCABULARY

Two groups of exercises are everywhere regarded as essential preliminaries to work in original composition. Those in the first group are intended to enlarge and organize the pupil's vocabulary. Now, I am aware that when one stands apart and looks at exercises designed to improve the

<sup>1</sup> *Instructions*, p. 64 ff. The page reference here, as in all following instances, is to the edition of the *Instructions* that was in circulation in 1912-1913.

vocabulary, they are likely to appear very artificial and ineffective. And, in truth, they may be. In the hands of a poorly trained teacher, or one who lacks the all-important teaching instinct, it would be difficult to imagine an exercise that could be more dismally futile. But this possibility seems to be disregarded by French educators. They are ready to admit that the lessons may become valueless, or even harmful, when directed by a poor teacher — and what exercise may not? — but they do not spring to the conclusion that such lessons should for that reason be cast aside. They have taken the good teacher as the norm, and have given themselves earnestly to the task of obviating the dangers and developing the advantages of a kind of instruction which at its best appears to them to have unquestioned value.

The theory upon which this instruction is based is not the individual opinion of the occasional teacher; it is accepted doctrine throughout the country. In the volume of *Instructions*<sup>1</sup> issued by the Minister to teachers in the secondary school system, it is summarized as follows: "The preceding exercises [in grammar] help the pupil to understand his native language and to enrich his vocabulary; but for this latter purpose, one ought not to rely solely upon them or even upon conversation, dictations, reading, or the explication of texts. The pupil must learn words, though never apart from things; he must be able to seize their signification and the exact shade of their meaning; and he must become accustomed to finding the words quickly when he stands in need. Hence the value of exercises devoted especially to the study of the vocabulary."

✓ The teaching of the vocabulary I found, then, falls readily into three parts: (1) enlarging; (2) sharpening; (3)

<sup>1</sup> Page 75.

quickening. To be sure, the instruction is not divided into three separate processes, but the teacher has a threefold aim that determines his method. One will not see every aspect of the method in one recitation or in several. Yet the principles emphasized in the *Instructions* to secondary teachers, in textbooks for primary schools, in classes in the mother tongue in both school systems, and even in many classes in English, serve to give outline to the varying details of the work.

In the exercises designed to enlarge the vocabulary, it is held to be absolutely essential that the pupil relate the word unmistakably to the object or idea which it represents. Although it is much more difficult to have a word in mind without relating it to some idea than we generally suppose, the French teacher seems to take no risk. He guides the pupil to feel the uselessness of words unless they are symbols of something physically or mentally real. Secondly, the pupil is required to relate a new word to other words already in his working vocabulary, so that it will remain firmly fixed in his mind. The new word may be linked to a synonym that is known to the pupil, it may be contrasted with words already known to him, or it simply may be linked to a group of ideas that by circumstances are brought to his mind frequently; but in some manner he is led to associate it with words which he knows well. Thirdly, the word is put into normal contexts — sometimes before its meanings are explained — so that the pupil may develop a feeling for its idiomatic use. And finally, in the definition or explanation that a word or a group of words may require, the beginning is specific rather than general, concrete rather than abstract. In theory at least, a teacher would establish the meaning of *sincere* in a boy's mind before he discussed the abstract quality, *sincerity*. He would show the

boy that many things are *rich* before he explained *richness*; or *noble*, before he explained *nobility*. Moreover, if a word has many definitions, the simplest one, the one most easily understood, the one that would most readily associate itself with the boy's stock of concrete ideas and images, is explained before those that are predominantly abstract or figurative. It is taken for granted that if a word is to be of much value to a boy, it must represent an idea clearly established in his mind, and it must have its individual flavor.

These exercises designed to enlarge the vocabulary are exceedingly interesting. The words chosen for a given day are close enough to the pupil's life to be stimulating, the recitation calls for much activity on the pupil's part, and the period is never long enough to become wearisome. In these classes the teacher is certainly aided by the Lessons in Things<sup>1</sup> which constitute a part of the programmes of study in both the primary and secondary schools. These provide an opportunity to discuss in the classroom a great many matters of interest that do not fall readily under any given subject in the course of study. They might well be called Lessons in General Information. Through them a boy of eight or nine becomes acquainted with the peasant and the wheat he grows; the miner and the ore or coal he mines; the different kinds of cloth used in making clothes; the miller, his mill, and the flour he makes; the vine-grower, his grapes, and the making of wine; the different kinds of combustibles; the different kinds of metals; the animals in the neighborhood; the more common plant life within reach of the school; the different kinds of food products that one may see on the market;

<sup>1</sup> *Leçons de choses*. They include much more than object lessons. For the full scope of the *Leçons de choses*, see *Plan d'études et programmes de l'Enseignement secondaire* (the earlier classes), and *Plan d'études et programmes d'enseignement des Écoles primaires*.

## 52 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

and dozens of other objects and related industries that are easily understood. All these Lessons in Things, of course, have as their chief object the sharpening of the power of observation and the paving of the way to natural sciences; but they must be a powerful aid in the systematic enlarging of a pupil's everyday vocabulary.

As the pupil advances in his course, the lessons, as might be expected, are based less on what he sees and more on what he reads. Ordinarily no long list of defined words is printed at the end of the lesson, and I did not see any teacher preparing a list himself. Frequently he calls attention to certain words when he assigns the lesson for the next day, but he does not set them apart in any detached manner. Writers of textbooks give special thought to the pupil's vocabulary when they choose readings, so that the teacher may be able to make steady progress without relying wholly upon his own resources. Quite logically, the words discussed in the higher lessons are not chiefly the names of objects and simple processes, but rather the names of ideas and qualities. Not many words are dealt with in one recitation, but these are treated fully, in order that the exercise may not become a string of perfunctory definitions. The word is looked at from many different points of view, and its meaning and uses are dwelt upon until the pupil must perforce feel that he knows it. Sometimes, too, in classes of pupils ten or twelve years old, analysis is employed. This exercise, however, is always simple, and, so far as I was able to observe, it is always oral. The pupil's mind has no opportunity to wander or become inactive.

Let us consider two or three instances of classroom procedure. One morning when I went to a primary school the teacher began the hour by calling upon a boy to recite from memory a poem that had been assigned a few days

before. As the boy recited, the teacher stopped him from time to time and called upon other pupils to explain the meaning of sentences, to indicate the function of clauses, and especially to explain the given use and the general meaning of individual words. The pupils were obliged to make all answers without referring to the book; that is to say, they were required to know the poem so well that they could explain merely from hearing, and at once, just what a given word meant in a given instance. Sometimes, too, the teacher called for other specific meanings of the word, and sometimes for other words of similar or opposite meaning. I could not help feeling that the lesson was rather hard on the boy who was required to stand and wait while the others explained, but I could see that the preparation which the lesson demanded had resulted in an intimate acquaintance with every important word in the text.

In another class the verb *associate* (*associer*) appeared in the paragraph that constituted the grammar lesson. The teacher asked a boy to use the word in as many different ways, both grammatically and according to meaning, as he could. Then the teacher and the class talked familiarly about *associates*, *society*, and the various meanings of *social*. The lesson was not a study of derivations in the ordinary meaning of the term, and it was not a formal study of synonyms. It was only a very intelligent attempt on the part of the teacher to have the pupils see that many words are related both in their origin and in the meanings that are attached to them in daily life. There is nothing novel in such an exercise; yet no boy could pass through it day after day without having his vocabulary rendered more serviceable.

These exercises, it will be noted, sprang directly from some given point or points in the lessons in reading and

## 54 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

grammar; and probably they are all the more valuable for that reason. But in the elementary and middle class textbooks make provision for work in vocabulary not through the lessons in reading and dictation, but through groups of related words that are only complementary to the other assignments in the mother tongue. For example here is a typical group printed in one textbook with a simple reading lesson on the horror of war: *Army, officer, soldier, military, cannon, gun, shell, bullet, fortress, declaration of war, hostilities, invasion, combat, battle, victory, defeat, arbitration, treaty, peace, arbitration, disarmament. National civil war, offensive war, defensive war. To declare war, to invade, to conclude peace, to resort to arbitration.* The question may arise as to whether a boy needs these words unless after the ideas for which they stand have in some very great manner touched his life. The French, however, work on the theory that words and ideas usually go hand in hand and that a word will often guide a boy to a valuable idea.

In the exercises designed primarily to sharpen feeling for words, one is sure to be impressed with the many means by which a word is brought into the pupil's life. He defines it, he finds examples of its accepted uses, he learns its original significance — its literal meaning when the word is predominantly figurative — he compares it with other words of similar meaning, and above all, he contrasts it with words that are essentially its opposite. It is scarcely too much to say that the basis of all word-teaching is contrast rather than likeness. If a given word is used chiefly as a noun, the teacher does not let the pupil form the notion that synonymous adjectives may be attached to it indiscriminately, but helps him to learn what adjectives are appropriate to it. If the word is an adjective or verb, he shows how it normally takes certain forms.

adverbs, and how others, as soon as they are brought into close relation with it, seem awkward and unidiomatic. In a similar manner he guides the pupil to see the distinctions that usage has established between nouns which in general meaning are the same. To take a very simple example, if the word *stem* appeared in a lesson, he would be extremely careful to bring out the difference between *stem* and *stalk*, *stem* and *trunk*, and *stalk* and *trunk*, so that the pupil would never fall into the error of using them as if they were convertible terms. Through numerous exercises of this kind the pupil is made to see that words do not have the same value, and that the choosing of them is not merely a question of finding approved dictionary definitions when occasion arises, but of possessing a word sense.

Concerning the exercises in calling words to mind quickly, little need be said. Their character has already been suggested. They usually consist of rapid-fire questions about the word itself, its use, its likes and opposites, and of oral or written practice in composition on subjects likely to call words of a given class into use. I saw no turning of verse into prose, but I did see many exercises that required the pupils to turn one kind of prose into another. In most instances the teacher simply read a story or an essay to the class and then called upon pupils to repeat it in language of their own. After a little practice of this kind, a boy unconsciously adopts many words that he has well understood but has not made a part of his working vocabulary. He does not surrender his individuality, as he must do — momentarily, at least — in writing imitations, yet he is in a state of open-mindedness that encourages a definite impression of what he reads or hears read.

The scope of the lessons in vocabulary is wide. By the time a boy has reached the age of twelve he not only has had

practice in calling simple objects by their right names, he has reached out into the world around him and made acquaintance with words belonging to a great variety of activities. He can speak intelligently about the professions, the occupations of workingmen, the farm, social life, political life; he can discuss the more familiar phenomena of atmosphere, the physical qualities of his friends, their virtues and their moral faults; he can use accurately words that spring from such relations as commerce, colonization, life in the city or the small village; and he can talk or write about such means of communication as ways, steamships, street-railways, and the telegraph and telephone. This ability he gains not by sporadic or haphazard plunging about, but by means of orderly, systematic study. The instruction is not over-rigid or mechanical; one may visit classrooms for months without feeling that the instruction was organized in any large way. Yet it is the careful organization that makes the wide scope of the work possible. The simplicity is not that of isolated, individual effort, but of well-designed plan.

After one has made due allowance for all human imperfections in teachers, and has put aside all over-idealistic notions of the possibilities of any method, one must admit that this instruction in the vocabulary is well worth all the effort that is put into it. The boy has, in the first place, a good fund of words which he can employ with accuracy and confidence. He can employ them with accuracy because he has had practice in making them carry the meaning that they ought to carry, and he can employ them with confidence because he has not relied upon chance in learning their use but instead has grown into a sound acquaintance with them through numerous discussions and much practice under the direction of the teacher. This immediate value of the study

however, is not the greatest. The greatest value lies in the slow but certain growth of a word conscience. The feeling for words which the pupil develops becomes a permanent part of his life. The boy who has had training of this kind may still use slangy or worn speech, but he is at least aware of what he does. And he will often avoid the colorless word not because he simply knows that it should be avoided, but because his quickened nature instinctively revolts against it.

### B. DICTATION

The second of the preliminary exercises universally employed by the French teacher of the mother tongue is dictation. In America, dictation seems to have been put aside to make way for something new. French teachers, however, do not hesitate to use an old-fashioned method or device if they believe it is good. Instead, therefore, of dropping dictation from the programme of studies, they have emphasized it and developed it until it is now a very important and thoroughly established part of their educational procedure. It is based on the conviction that a child can acquire skill before he develops the power of profound or sustained thought. He has much practice, then, in writing the thoughts of others while he is yet too young to write his own. Teachers admit that dictation has its dangers, but since they regard these as incomparable to its possible value, they employ it, just as they employ exercises in vocabulary, with the confidence that though they are risking small dangers, they are following the direction of a larger common sense.

French teachers usually dwell upon four or five specific values of dictation. It gives the pupil much practice in the handling of the sentence; it directs his attention to

## 58 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

grammatical constructions; it helps him to learn to spell, punctuate, and to capitalize; it enlarges his vocabulary; gives him practice in the use of words already known to him; and it fills his mind with good standards of speech. There should be added one value that the thoughtful teacher must regard as greatest of all; namely, that dictation prevents the pupil from separating spoken language from writing. One of the objections almost invariably made by the young pupil to practice in original composition is that writing seems an artificial process quite unlike anything he has ever before attempted. In making this objection, he of course, merely gives expression to the fact that language is naturally a matter of speech rather than writing, and the additional fact that he has not felt a close relation between what he says by word of mouth and what he writes on paper. If then, before he begins composition, and later while he is practicing it in an elementary manner, he has drill in writing down what he hears, the relation between speech and writing is much less likely to be weakened. While he is listening carefully to his teacher's reading, catching the words in their natural thought groups, and putting them down one by one in his exercise-book, he is not only learning much about the mechanics of composition, but he is saving himself from the error of looking upon theme-writing as something far removed from normal existence.

In giving dictations, the teacher exercises great care. After the very earliest classes, where the work must necessarily be simple, he does not give isolated or detached sentences, but instead, a complete, interesting paragraph. Moreover, he always explains the paragraph fully before he asks the pupil to write it down. This precaution is regarded as so important that a teacher is prohibited from requiring a pupil to write down anything that is meaningless or vague.

Again, he reads a paragraph that contains material suited to keep the pupil's attention. That is to say, the ideas and the words in which they are expressed must be just within the pupil's reach. And finally, the teacher guards against letting the exercise become monotonous. It is never long — usually it is a short, crisp paragraph — the corrections are made immediately while interest is warm, and the pupil is not asked to rewrite the dictation unless he has been exceedingly careless. The ten or fifteen minutes are so full of pleasant activity that the time passes quickly, and the boy seems never to dream that he is doing something that might, under a thoughtless teacher, become a dreary, useless punishment.

The following passage from Daudet is a specimen of the material read for dictation to boys of nine years. Perhaps it ought to be explained in passing that the short stories of Daudet occupy a large place in many of the earlier exercises in the mother tongue. In this instance, the teacher read the passage and discussed some of the words, then dictated it sentence by sentence. When he had finished, several boys read what they had written, one boy spelled all the more difficult words, and then all of them underscored certain words that were to form the basis of a lesson in grammar the following day. The passage:

Ah, Monsieur Seguin's little goat, how pretty she was! How pretty she was with her soft eyes, her beard like a corporal's, her shiny black hoofs, her horns striped like a zebra, and her long, white hair which formed a kind of greatcoat. . . . Behind his house Monsieur Seguin had an enclosure surrounded by hawthorns. There he put his new boarder. He fastened her to a stake in the place where the grass was best, taking care to give her plenty of rope; and from time to time he went to see if she was getting along all right. The little goat was very happy and ate the grass with such an appetite that Monsieur Seguin was delighted.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Translated from *Le Chèvre de Monsieur Seguin*.

## 60 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

The French boy of ten or twelve has developed a hearing and quick writing to such a degree that he can make tests of his ability to write English. I made tests of his ability to write English. One day example, when I went to a classroom to hear a recitation I asked the teacher if I might give a dictation. The boys in the class were eleven and twelve years of age, and they were approaching the end of their second year in English study. The anecdote which I selected was, I found making inquiry, entirely new to them. It follows:

When General Washington was President of the United States, had a secretary who was directed to come to him at a certain hour each day. More than once he was late, and excused himself by saying that his watch was wrong. "Then," said the President, "if your watch is to blame, either you must get another watch or I must have another secretary."

First I read the paragraph through, in order to be sure that every pupil understood all the words; next I read sentence by sentence and the pupils took it down; and then I read it through rapidly, so that they might supply obvious omissions. There were twenty-eight boys in the class and eleven of them wrote the passage without error. Moreover, five others made only one error each, and no boy in the class made more than ten.

This ability to take dictation with such accuracy prompted me to make similar tests in our native tongue when I returned to America; and since I had tested the French pupils not only in French but in English, it was less difficult to make some comparisons. I began by dictating the same anecdote to American boys and girls who were just as old as the French pupils. Then I extended the test to higher grades. At the time I write I have dictated the paragraph in eighteen different schools, to more than five hundred pupils. The cities in which I have given the test

range in size from a few thousand to a quarter-million; and in each instance I have given it only in schools suggested by the superintendent. In the total number of papers that I have secured in this manner there are, making full allowance for all possible variations in capitalization and punctuation, just eleven that are perfect.<sup>1</sup> Comparatively few approach perfection, and a very large number are full of the most egregious blunders. Words are left out, words are misspelled, punctuation is omitted, capitals are omitted, and capitals are put in where they do not belong. Many papers have as many as twenty errors each, and some have forty. This comparison and others of a similar kind that I have made are sufficient to convince one beyond doubt that the French boy of eleven or twelve has gained materially over the American boy of the same age in writing language accurately.

This advantage gained by the young French boy includes ability to spell. And when it is remembered that he learns to spell chiefly through dictation, his progress ought to be significant to American teachers. A small part of his more thorough mastery of spelling may, perhaps, be attributed to the simpler orthography of the French language; but it must be a very small part. In the first place, French is not an extremely easy language to spell. Anyone who has attempted to write it, even in the most elementary way, knows that there are pitfalls for the unwary. And French teachers appreciate the difficulties that even the most conscientious pupil must encounter. But there is another reason why the pupil's ability to spell cannot be attributed

<sup>1</sup> Five hundred college freshmen wrote forty-seven perfect papers. The French class which I have used in this comparison was unquestionably a very good one; but some of the American school classes were ranked as very good also. The college freshmen were in two state universities and two endowed colleges.

wholly to simpler orthography: he is able to spell in English, as well as in his own tongue. As I write, I have before me two hundred pages of exercises in English written by French boys ranging in age from nine to twelve years. With the exception of fifty pages, these are not selected papers, but are the work of the average of the classes for which I secured them; and in many instances they are classroom exercises written without preparation. Yet all these there are only seven misspelled words.<sup>1</sup>

The greater part of this ability to spell we can attribute only to a well-developed spelling conscience; and dictation constitutes the chief means of its early development. In fact, I saw no spelling whatever of isolated lists of words such as we have in our spelling books. Instead, as I have already suggested, the pupils write the words from dictation in normal context, and after they have written, they go over the entire paragraph and spell the words that afford most difficulty. Usually one boy spells while the others watch for errors in the speller's work and their own. If a boy is in doubt about a word that is not spelled in due course, he calls for it; and if the teacher questions anyone's ability to spell a word that has not been chosen by the boy who leads in the recitation, he immediately calls for that word. It may be seen, then, that spelling cannot easily be regarded as a useless exercise by the boy unless he looks upon the rest of his training in the mother tongue as equally useless. His spelling is not separated from his reading and writing.

It is only because spelling is an extremely irritating problem in America that I emphasize this particular value of

<sup>1</sup> These words are *English* (Inglisch), *stretch* (strech't), *umbrella* (umbrela), *weather* (waether), *raining* (reaning), *high* (hight), and *which* (wich). In one city the pupils in the *lycée* spelled English words poorly, but the entire character of the work in English was so far below that of the other cities I visited, that the spelling seemed to be only a part of the general neglect.

dictation. As was pointed out in an earlier paragraph, this is but one value among several, and perhaps not the most important. Punctuation, word order, sentence relations, the meaning of words, the movement and balance of good writing, and the close relation of spoken and written language are also grounded deeply in the pupil's mind. When, therefore, he is practicing dictation, he is becoming so intimately acquainted with a number of essential matters that his knowledge of them passes over from mere knowledge to feeling, and thus becomes available as "second nature" when he is ready to write compositions of his own.

### III. MATERIAL FOR THEMES

#### A. THE EMPHASIS PLACED ON GOOD MATERIAL

When we turn from the preliminary preparation for writing to the actual work of constructing original compositions, we find at the outset that the French teacher attaches unusual importance to the kind of material with which a pupil practices. It is possible to conceive of a time in the history of French education when the substance of a pupil's writing might have been sacrificed to the niceties of elegant expression; but certainly no such evil exists to-day. In truth, here in our own country, where we boast — sometimes to our misfortune — that "substance is the thing," we give much less attention to the finding and developing of theme material than does the average teacher in France. It is true that the French are not yet satisfied with what they have accomplished in giving material its deserved place in the teaching of composition. In spite of the progress they have made, they believe that much yet remains to be done. But this very state of mind indicates how much importance is attached to subject-matter.

## 64 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

Material receives much of the teacher's thought not because in a given instance it has a large part in determining the boy's success in his writing, but also because subject-matter about which a boy writes from month to month and from year to year may be made an extremely influential part of his education. Here again we may serve the results of the Frenchman's ability to see things in the large. Regardless of differences of opinion at questions of detail, teachers agree that theme material should have a threefold influence upon a pupil's life: it should cultivate (1) observation, (2) imagination, and reflection or judgment.

In daily practice, the French watchword is sincerity. Teachers and heads of schools feel that in the older days when the Classical languages dominated completely the teaching of the mother tongue, much of the material assigned was to some extent beyond the pupil's mental reach. Consequently there is to-day a loud cry and a strict warning against the encouragement of any sort of intellectual hypocrisy. One may yet meet occasionally with a teacher who clings to the older method of giving his boys culture and finish, but he is so much alone and so thoroughly on the defensive that he seems to belong to another educational age. The teacher that one meets every day believes in making theme material vital by relating it to the pupil's life. Neither in the grade of the material nor in the type within the grade does he permit unnecessary temptation to falsehood or affectation. Thus it comes about that the very young boy does not attempt to write organized compositions at all; that his first efforts in original work require only direct observation or the memory of observation previously made; that the next in order require observation and imagination; and that only as he approaches the end of his

course — that is to say, when he would be a senior in an American high school or a freshman in college — is the material he must write upon designed chiefly to encourage analysis or reflection. Of course, these lines of demarcation are not rigidly drawn. The young pupil is asked to reflect, and the oldest pupil is asked to observe and imagine; but the emphasis is first upon observation, then upon imagination, and finally upon reflection.

#### B. THE KIND OF MATERIAL ASSIGNED

The following theme subjects, chosen from a large number that were used in the secondary and primary school systems, are, I believe, representative. In two or three instances I have given the class of subject, rather than the specific assignment for a given day, so that the field from which the short, frequent exercises are drawn may be more readily seen. In all other instances I have used the subject just as it was dictated to the pupil.

Note that the French teacher does not assign a title merely. Sometimes he suggests a title, sometimes he leaves the pupil free to draw a title from the subject assigned; but in every instance he gives a full statement of the subject, so that a boy cannot fail to understand the nature of the work he is to attempt. Note, too, that the subjects calling for analytical treatment are not based upon reading alone, and that very frequently some idea in a given piece of literature, rather than the piece itself, is to be treated. The earlier themes based on reading are usually either reproductions expressed in the pupil's own words, or very simple expressions of opinion or preference.

(1) Subjects calling chiefly for accurate observation. Age of pupils, from ten to thirteen years.

## 66 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

(a) Oral and written reproduction of passages read before the class and explained by the teacher. These lessons were drawn from his geography, literature, and elementary science.

[In the primary school from which I secured this assignment the teacher called for a written lesson of this kind at least once a month throughout the year. Age of the pupils, eleven.]

(b) The description of a simple object, such as a hammer, foot book-satchel, apple, or hat. Remember that description may appeal to all the senses. One should speak, then, of the shape of the object, its size, color, and, if important, its odor and touch.

[The object for a given lesson was, of course, specifically indicated by the teacher.]

(c) Tell how a robin (or some other bird) builds its nest.

(d) Have you ever observed how your classmates enter the recreation-room? Write an account of the way they enter one of your classes to-day, to-morrow, or the day following.

(e) Write a letter to a big brother who is serving his time in the army. What are some of the things you would be sure to tell him?

(f) In a letter to a boy who has recently visited you, announce the sudden, accidental death of a common friend.

(g) Explain some game that you play. Be sure to speak of the kind of game, whether of skill or of chance; the material employed and the placing of it; the number of players; and the important rules one must follow.

(h) Describe a classmate, a teacher, or some one seen frequently along the street.

[This description was to be purely physical; no attempt was to be made to characterize the person.]

(i) Write a characterization of some one whom you know intimately.

[This assignment was accompanied by a full discussion of the qualities the pupil ought to be able to see, and by an explanation of the relation of characterization and purely physical description.]

(j) Have you ever observed the calm appearance of things just at the end of the day? Write about the end of the day as you see it where you live.

As one might infer from what was said in Chapter II about the clearly different aims of the two school systems, the emphasis placed on a given kind of material is deter-

mined largely by the system in which the assignments are made. For example, in an elementary secondary school I found that the four assignments for the month of March were as follows: (1) one reproduction of a subject discussed in class; (2) two simple narratives; and (3) a letter on a familiar subject. In a corresponding primary school the eight assignments were: (1) one reproduction of a subject discussed in class; (2) one simple narrative; (3) three descriptions of plants; and (4) three descriptions of animals. Nevertheless, the chief purpose in the lower classes of the two systems is the same; namely, to encourage observation and to develop the pupil's power to write down what he sees.

(2) Subjects which in the main require imaginative treatment. Age of the pupils, thirteen to fifteen years.

(a) Write a letter to the Prefect asking that an old friend who lost an arm in the Franco-Prussian war be put in charge of a tobacco shop that has become vacant.

[The French government holds a monopoly on tobacco, and directs its sale.]

(b) Citronet is the worst little "mucker" in the village. (Sketch his physical and moral qualities and his personal history.) One day he crouched down on the rear part of a big automobile that stopped for an instant in the public square. He meant to jump off at the end of the village, but the speed was too great; and the driver did not stop until he had gone fifty miles. Describe the astonishment of the party when they discovered Citronet — and in what a state! Generous, they took him to the nearest railroad station and bought him a third-class ticket for the return trip. Impressions of the return.

(c) The Loire is out of bank. On a little island that the high waters have formed, a hare finds himself imprisoned. A man sees him there and smiles to himself at the easy capture he can make. In a small boat he rows to the island. He climbs out, ties the boat hastily, and endeavors to catch his game. The hare, hard pressed in the chase, leaps into the boat; his weight is sufficient to pull the cord loose. Thus he rides off downstream and leaves the man a captive on the island.

## 68 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

(d) I was present one day at the departure of the swallows. In the morning. The telegraph wires and some of the roofs were alive with birds that chattered and circled about. All at once as if at a signal given, they departed in a compact flock toward south. My thought followed them in their flight, and I am myself by picturing the countries and the bodies of water that would traverse in their rapid course.

(e) What are some of the characteristic aspects of Paris life (crowds, the boulevards, the shops, etc.) on New Year's Day?

[This subject was assigned, of course, in a Paris school.]

(f) Winter is almost over. Do you notice any signs of spring? What, after all, are the sure indications that spring is approaching?

(g) It has rained a long time; the river is heavy and yellow. Little by little it rises until the water reaches the houses closest to its banks; soon it invades the neighboring streets; the alarm is given. . . . people proceed with the hasty movements; many of the scenes bring tears to the eyes of the rescuers. Some of the courageous men save victims from the water; others assist them in getting from the inundated houses. As they struggle against the great scourge, one finds the souls of men growing in charity and fraternity.

[Given at Paris, where the memories of the destructive flood of 1910-11 were still vivid.]

(h) By drawing upon your memory and imagination, recount a journey that you supposedly take in an aeroplane. If you like, explain what part this journey has led you to believe air travel will play in the life of to-morrow.

(i) You pass your vacation in a very small village in Normandy where airships are not often seen. One day some one hears a humming noise above the house-tops. It is a dirigible. Give an account of the impressions that this grand event produces, and the comments and reflections that it excites.

(j) You see a miserable-looking boy take a small loaf of bread from the show-window of a bakery and eat it in a dark corner near by. Describe the scene. Do you intervene and, if you do, in what manner? Why?

(3) Subjects that, in the main, require analysis, thinking and reflection. Age of the pupils, fifteen to eighteen years.

(a) Reflect upon this thought expressed by a contemporary author making use of your own observation and experience.

"Everything I saw passing in the street, — the people, the beasts and the inanimate objects, — contributed more than one would be

lieve to my appreciation of the simple and the strong in life. Nothing is better than the street for acquainting a child with the social machine. . . . He must have breathed the air of the street in order to feel that the law of labor is divine and that everyone must perform his task in the world."

(Anatole France, *Le Livre de mon ami*, page 157.)

(b) What are the three or four qualities that you prefer above all others in your friends?

(c) Do you agree with Sainte-Beuve in his expression of this wish?

"To be born, to live, and to die in the same house!"

(d) Jean-Jacques Rousseau declared that books were the instruments of childhood's greatest misery. He would not put them in the hands of children before the age of twelve, "reading being the greatest scourge of early youth." In a letter to some friend, say what you think of this opinion. If you do not agree with it, point out some of the pleasurable advantages that children gain from being able to read.

(e) Victor Hugo, writing to one of his friends about 1835, said that he had many sources of inspiration: the daily happenings, the spectacle of nature, the joys and apprehensions that stir humanity now as always. But he found his greatest pleasure, he explained, in calling up the memories of his happy childhood and in living over all the friendships and affections of his infancy and the years of his education. And to this pleasure he added that of seeing his own children about him and smiling at their innocent gaiety. He dreamed, he said, of becoming the great poet of family life and fireside joys.

In the poems of Hugo that you have read, recall the influences of this love for home life.

(f) Have you formed any notion of the rôle of chance and the rôle of personal merit in the affairs of life? What is it?

(g) What do you think of the oft-repeated words: "The absurd man is the one who never changes his mind"?

(h) The Abbé de Saint-Pierre has sent his *Projet de paix perpétuelle* to Fontenelle. Compose Fontenelle's response.

(i) A sculptor is reducing a block of marble. At each stroke the marble groans sadly. The sculptor asks for the cause of these complaints. The marble declares that it suffers from the wounds. "But why should you complain," demands the sculptor, "when my chisel is making the statue of a god?" Develop the dialogue.

(j) By drawing upon your own experience in the study of the philosophic writers of the eighteenth century, write a letter to a young English friend who in his course in French is about to take up the study of Montesquieu.

(k) Analyze in the *Morceaux Choisis* of Desgranges, pp. 21 the extract from Montaigne and set forth (dégager): (1) Montaigne's theories of education; (2) the characteristics of his style; (3) general characteristics of the Renaissance.

(l) Show in Lamartine's *l'Isolément* the essential character of the romantic state of mind.

(m) Charles VIII had a natural taste for grand exploits and heroic adventures. One day he was enthusiastically reading the *Chanson de Roland*. Anne de Beaujeu tried to turn his attention to more practical matters. Try to imagine the scene and the conversation.

(n) J.-J. Rousseau loved nature only in her wild state. He said the French gardens of the seventeenth century: "To what purpose are these walks, so straight, so carefully covered with sand, that are found everywhere? and these stars, that, instead of spreading before the eyes the magnitude of a park, as is imagined, serve only to show its limits? Does one see in the midst of a forest the sand, a river-bed? or does the foot find a sweeter comfort in the sand than on the moss or the greensward? Does nature employ the square as the rule unceasingly? Is it feared that she will be recognized as something, in spite of all the pains taken to disfigure her?"

Take a walk through the gardens of the Grand and the Petit Trianon [the material was assigned in the lycée at Versailles] and reflect upon this criticism by Rousseau. Do you agree with him?

A glance at the last group of subjects will convince one that the French boy of sixteen or seventeen years must do some actual thinking for himself. And so far as I have opportunity to observe, he is able to do it. He does not, am sure, excel the American boy of the same age in imaginative power. The American boy, in spite of all that is said about our utilitarian, commercial existence, has quite good imagination. Moreover, by force of our free, new and rapidly developing business and social life, he has a wider vision of the possibilities of the world than the French boy has. But when a subject calls for reflection, for pondering upon important points, for tracing out subordinate lines of thought, for thinking, the French boy of the same age is his superior. The French boy thinks rapidly, accurately, and

despite all the dissertations on French superficiality, he penetrates into things. If subjects similar to the ones included in this last group were drawn from English literature and assigned to American college freshmen, how many of them would be able to treat the material in any satisfactory manner whatsoever?

The boy in the *Lycée* finds a powerful stimulus to write on literary subjects of this kind in the prospect of his baccalaureate examination.<sup>1</sup> This examination, conducted by an impartial jury that is in no official way related to the *Lycée* from which a boy comes, is decidedly rigid, and the composition that is required is usually regarded as the most difficult part of all. The candidate must not only possess knowledge about literature, but he must understand the literature itself, he must be able to reflect upon new literary relations or new ideas suggested by the examiners, and he must be able to explain himself to others. The following subjects are typical of those assigned in recent years. In a given examination the candidate chooses one subject from a list of three.<sup>2</sup> He must write the composition in a period of three hours. Ordinarily he writes not more than a dozen pages.

It is said customarily that the literature of the seventeenth century was impersonal; that is, the personality of the writer did not reveal itself. Discuss this assertion.

Lille, July, 1906.

"Victor Hugo," wrote a critic, "thinks only in images." And the great poet's imaginative power always has been admired. By studying the images in some poem of his that you care to choose, see if you can determine just what this power is.

Rennes, October, 1905.

<sup>1</sup> For a further discussion of the baccalaureate examination and its influence on the mother tongue, see Chapter VII.

<sup>2</sup> The subjects are arranged by groups and by *académies* in *Annales du Baccalaureat*. Librairie Vuibert. In a few instances I have relied upon other sources.

## 72 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

Many writers, among others J.-J. Rousseau and Lamartine, attacked the morality of La Fontaine's *Fables*. Can one well defend Nancy, July, 1909.

Write what you know and what you think of the three unities Grenoble, October, 1907.

If you were resolved to follow the life of a colonist, what French colony should you prefer to inhabit? Indicate the reasons for your choice.

Poitiers, October, 1908.

Discuss this thought of Joubert and verify it by examples drawn from the literature of the last three centuries: "The writers who have influence are only the men who express perfectly what others think and who awaken in the minds of others the ideas or sentiments that tend to unfold and develop."

Lyon, July, 1905.

Is it accurate to say with Buffon that genius is only long patience? Paris, October, 1906.

"Who is the man," asked Madame de Staél, "whose genius is not in a great many respects, the result of the age in which he lived?" Comment on this thought, and support your position with two examples, one from political history and one from literature.

Rennes, July, 1906.

What do you think of this idea expressed by Thiers in the preface of his *Histoire de la Révolution*? "Perhaps the best time to write history is just when the participants are ready to die. One can then collect their testimony without sharing their passions."

Lyon, October, 1907.

Victor Hugo has written this sentence, rich in meaning in its conciseness: "Lyrical genius: to be oneself; dramatic genius: to be others." What do you think about it?

Poitiers, July, 1907.

Explain and refute this thought expressed by Maeterlinck (*L'Intelligence des fleurs*, the chapter entitled *l'Inquiétude de notre morale*): "In this life there are only two real evils: sickness and poverty; and two true and irreducible goods: health and riches."

Bordeaux, July, 1913.

### A UNE JEUNE MORTE

Comme on voit sur la branche au mois de mai la rose  
En sa belle jeunesse, en sa première fleur,  
Rendre le ciel jaloux de sa vive couleur,  
Quand l'aube de ses pleurs au point du jour l'arrose,

La grâce dans sa feuille et l'amour se repose,  
 Embaumant les jardins et les arbres d'odeur;  
 Mais, battue ou de pluie ou d'excessive ardeur,  
 Languissante elle meurt, feuille à feuille déclose.

Ainsi, en ta première et jeune nouveauté,  
 Quand la terre et le ciel honoraient ta beauté,  
 La Parque t'a tuée, et cendre tu reposes.

Pour obsèques reçois mes larmes et mes pleurs,  
 Ce vase plein de lait, ce panier plein de fleurs,  
 Afin que, vif et mort, ton corps ne soit que roses.

(RONSARD, *Amours*, II, 14.)

Justify, from the point of view of thought, sentiment, and style, the judgment of M. Emile Faguet on this sonnet: ". . . marvelous little poem, the finest perhaps and the most finished of all the works of Ronsard."

Grenoble, October, 1913.

When the news of the death of Washington reaches France (1799), La Fayette writes to one of his friends. In deplored this loss, he reviews some of the principal episodes in the life of Washington. What a work he leaves after him! What great teachings in the examples he has given! [Develop.]

Aix-Marseille, July, 1913.

It is said of the eighteenth century that it was peculiarly "the century of ideas." What is to be understood by that? Indicate some ideas that we owe to the eighteenth century.

Paris, October, 1913.

Who is your favorite poet? Explain the kind of pleasure that you derive from reading him. *Above all, refrain from reciting a lesson you have learned; say simply, and as elegantly as you can, that which you have understood, you.* And do not write upon this subject unless you can discuss a poet who is known to you through your own reading of his works and whom you prefer to all others through your own personal taste. Literary platitudes will only injure your case. Give extreme care to organization and style.

Rennes, July, 1913.

What benefit have you derived from the practice of translating? Aix-Marseille, October, 1913.

Of all the great [modern] foreign writers that you have read, which one seems to you to have enriched your intellectual and moral life most? Develop the reasons for your choice, and indicate how you are indebted to this writer.

Paris, July, 1913.

## 74 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

Victor Hugo wrote in the preface to *Ruy Blas*: "That which crowd demands almost exclusively in a dramatic work is action; that which the women wish before all is passion; that which the thinl search for especially is character." Explain this view, and see among the plays you know, you can think of any that meet equally three of these requirements.

Lille, July, 1913.

Develop: La Fontaine, at the Academy, in a discussion relative the Dictionary, defends the old French language against the scrup of those who, under pretext of purifying the language, impoverish Grenoble, July, 1913.

France possesses a vast colonial empire. Why ought she to keep it, to develop it, to defend it?

Caen, July, 1913.

A letter from Washington, President of the United States, to his friend La Fayette (August, 1789).

He congratulates him on having helped to give liberty to France after having done so much toward the liberty of the United States.

He praises La Fayette for having — after the revolution of July 1 — established order and tranquillity, conditions essential to liberty.

At the end he gives him some news, and tells him especially about the conditions of the republic: the constitution (quite recent, 1787) is beginning to have effect and to strengthen the United States, etc.

Lille, October, 1913.

[A specimen group of subjects. The candidate chooses one.]

(a) Discuss this theory of Chateaubriand: "It is very proper and very useful to understand, to study, to read living foreign languages, rather dangerous to speak them, and extremely dangerous to write them."

(b) General Bonaparte said in December, 1799, in a proclamation: "The first qualities of a soldier are steadiness and discipline; only after these comes valor." You will explain this thought, illustrating it, if you can, with some examples drawn from our history.

(c) Is one justified in saying "the gentle Racine"? <sup>1</sup>  
Paris, July, 1913.

It should be said that the character of the entire school programme helps to develop this power to analyze, to

<sup>1</sup> I am aware that "the gentle Racine" is a very imperfect rendering of "le doux Racine."

reflect. Nevertheless, a large part of it is due to the care and the skill with which subjects for written work are assigned. Above the elementary classes the material is never wholly new, never wholly familiar. The general practice<sup>1</sup> is to assign material just within reach, so that with the illumination which results from the classroom preparation for writing, the pupils will have enough acquaintance with the subject to keep them from becoming discouraged, yet not enough to make them feel satisfied and indifferent.

### C. THE PREPARATION OF MATERIAL

In helping pupils toward the actual process of writing down what they have to say, the French teachers so generally follow one practice that it must be regarded as an essential part of their method of instruction. This is the working over of material in the classroom. Teachers seem to feel that their first duty is to arouse the boy's interest in his subject and to put his mind in motion. He is made to feel at the outset that he must not attempt to organize his material — much less to write — until he knows what the material really is. Hence much emphasis is placed upon what one teacher aptly called the imaginative part of composing. That is to say, the boy is encouraged to let his power of association run free for the purpose of collecting as many ideas or images as possible. His only aim is to reach the limits of his subject; nothing that promises to be of the least value is permitted to escape. After these miscellaneous ideas or images are jotted down or by some other means fixed in mind, the members of the class examine them more carefully. And here, it might be observed in passing,

<sup>1</sup> In the secondary schools, the teacher has very clear directions concerning the assignment of material. These directions, in the main, represent the practice of the best teachers. See *Instructions*, pp. 78 and 80 f.

## 76 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRIT

speech is brought into use as an aid to writing. The exercise does not partake in the least of the nature of a formal lesson in oral composition, but the members of the class must speak accurately and clearly. The teacher questions the pupils, the pupils question the teacher, and the pupils question one another. The purpose is not to provide the indolent with material that is ready to use, but to give everyone enough of a basis to enable him to do thinking for his own. In the lower grades, the exercise is frequently nothing more than questions and answers designed to reveal the accuracy with which observations have been made; but in the higher grades it assumes the character of an interesting round-table discussion. Let us consider a specific instance.

The boys in the class were sixteen years old. The subject set for the composition was the one quoted from Anatole France<sup>1</sup> on a preceding page: "Everything I saw passing in the street, — the people, the beasts, the inanimate objects — contributed more than one would believe to my appreciation of the simple and the strong in life. Nothing is better than the street for acquainting a child with the social machine. . . . He must have breathed the air of the street in order to learn that the law of labor is divine and that every man must perform his task in the world." On the day set apart for the reading of the themes written on this subject, the discussion that preceded the constructive criticism (see page 82) revealed the fact that even the smallest details of the subject had been taken up in the classroom before any of the pupils had begun to write. It was very obvious that the members of the class had sought together to define "the social machine"; that they had noted the author's power of close observation; and that they had talked of the life of the

<sup>1</sup> This seemed to be a favorite subject.

street as they themselves knew it, and had made a list of the objects which give the street its variety. This list included soldiers, the military band, grocers, chauffeurs, scissors-grinders, poor women selling cherries or apples, coal dealers, bakers, thrifty shop-owners, day-laborers, wealthy men and women in automobiles, beggars, children selling flowers, and many other parts of "the social machine." Then everyone had tried to imagine the kind of houses these different classes of people went to at the close of the day; the kind of food they ate; the kind of clothes they wore in the evening; the spirit of their family life; the subjects of their conversation; and even the newspapers they probably read. All of these matters had been talked over without restraint in the classroom; and it was only after the pupils had seen the material in this very concrete way that they were asked to think about its significance and to put their conclusions into organized form.<sup>1</sup>

The French teacher's relation to the pupil who is organizing material for a theme is deserving of notice. He does not relieve himself of responsibility by saying to the pupil, "Now you have seen some of the material that our subject includes; write what you have to say." Instead, he regards the pupil all the while — especially in the lower and middle grades — as a learner who needs direction. He does not look upon a fourteen-year-old boy as a sufficient master of thought and language to write, unaided, about a subject of any consequence. "If he is able to do this," I was frequently told, "then he needs no teacher." And there seems to be no fear whatever about destroying the pupil's self-reliance. It seems to be taken for granted that a boy

<sup>1</sup> After this chapter was made into page proof I received from a French *lycée* several outlines and themes developed in this manner by teacher and pupils on "The Supposed Speech of Theodore Roosevelt at Chicago in Favor of the Allies."

## 78 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

may develop self-reliance through foresight as well as through unguided struggle.

The character of the teacher's assistance depends, of course, on the age of the pupils and the kind of material. In classes of boys ten or twelve years old, I saw the teacher go to the extent of working out with the pupils a fairly definite plan of the composition they were to write. Sometimes, too, a pupil was called upon to give a little lecture of three or five minutes, so that he and the class might discuss how much there was to say on the subject, and how all the material, if thought through clearly, would fall readily into place. Here is an example, — which incidentally represents a type of "moral" subject that one finds now a great deal more frequently than, particularly in the primary schools. The teacher and pupils discussed the assignment for a time and made this rough plan on the blackboard:

### SO FAR AS POSSIBLE WE SHOULD BE OBLIGING TO EVERYBODY

#### I. An example.

1. The service rendered.
2. The recompense.

#### II. The scope of the subject.

#### III. Recollection of various instances.

#### IV. Concluding observations.

Then several pupils were asked to tell briefly how they would treat the subject, and to give instances of the rewards of being thoughtful for others. After these little lectures each pupil turned immediately to the task of converting the general outline into a specific composition. In the upper classes, the assignment may be made without much supplementary comment if the theme is to be based upon reading. I noticed, however, that when a specific poem or passage of prose constituted the subject-matter of the theme, the classroom discussion was very complete.

## IV. THE CRITICISM OF THEMES

## A. IDEALS IN CRITICISM

Although teachers of the mother tongue do not hold with perfect unanimity to one ideal in grading written work, one party is to-day so overwhelmingly in the majority that it may almost be said to represent the conviction of the entire country. (There was a time — I was told frequently, and could easily accept the statement as the truth — when a large per cent of the teachers insisted that every pupil, regardless of his interests or his plans for life, should write with conventional literary finish. But to-day the prevailing belief is that, above all, a boy should be able to think with vigor, to organize his thoughts with sureness, and to express himself with correctness and with faithfulness to his own temperament and character.) In other words, most teachers believe that the great body of boys in the upper grades should be trained in normal expression, rather than in any special graces that might be desired by the occasional genius. The prevailing ideal, then, is not to make a great body of literary writers, however desirable it might be to do so, but to enable boys, whatever their chief interests in life, to think their thoughts out into the best expression possible, to record their feelings with accuracy and honesty, and to feel the importance of putting everything into good form. There is no abandoning of the ideal of good form; the majority of the teachers to-day insist merely that there be a wider interpretation of the term so that it may be applied to things practical and scientific as well as to things wholly literary.

Invariably in criticism, teachers dwell upon subject-matter and its organization. Contrary to popular pedagogical notions current in some parts of our own country,

## 80 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

French teachers do not busy themselves with lessor literary millinery or any other artificial kind of decoration. Of course, in the early grades the matters to receive attention are ordinary accuracy and conventional correctness. In the upper grades, however, these give way to problems of structure. Material, the larger and smaller questions of organization, the total effect of what has been written,—these are the matters that receive chief consideration. The examination of any large number of graded themes will help one to see the force of this assertion: “ You seem to have a firm grasp of the subject.” “ The repetition of the same idea here weakens the effect of the entire theme.” “ You introduce the subject well.” “ The introduction is beside the point; the purpose of an introduction is to introduce.” “ The introduction is too long; it leads you away from your subject.” “ The ideas are not to the point, although some of them are not treated fully enough and they are expressed in a style at once correct and extreme clear.” “ Where does this paragraph belong? It seems to stand out in space.” “ You have used your imagination well.” “ Your reflection seems not to have been very profound.” So the marginal comments run.

To be sure, mechanical details are not overlooked if the need attention; but in the higher grades one finds comparatively few faults of this kind. In my visits from school to school it was a perpetual delight to see the thoughtfully prepared, carefully and cleanly written manuscripts that pupils submitted. I do not wish to leave the impression that France is an ideal land where pupils write only good compositions; but most pupils write with a large degree of care. The spirit of the school fosters accuracy and thoughtfulness. And in cases where the inevitable poor pupil risks violating custom by handing in “ sloppy ” work, the teacher

is likely to regard his action as a personal insult. Thus it comes about that the feeling among pupils against carelessness and childish errors is so pronounced that the teacher of advanced classes need say comparatively little concerning "the mechanics" of writing. He can place emphasis upon larger matters because he is reasonably free from the necessity of trying to correct faults that should have been dealt with in the earlier grades of the school.

#### B. THE METHOD OF CRITICISM

The usual method of criticising themes is significant in at least two respects. In the first place, the teacher makes a very large part of his criticism orally in the presence of the entire class. The written criticism is not slighted. But the vigorous classroom discussion is regarded as the chief means of helping pupils to do better work.

Ordinarily when the teacher begins this oral part of the criticism, he first satisfies himself that the pupils are wide awake and intent upon the matter in hand. Sometimes he accomplishes this end by asking rapid-fire questions about a number of different themes; sometimes he directs questions to three or four pupils about one theme; and sometimes he calls a pupil to the desk, asks him to stand so that his classmates may hear, and then plies him with questions solely about the theme he himself has submitted. In some such manner the teacher stimulates an intellectual activity that is a sure guarantee against lifelessness in the lesson proper. Once this is begun, the teacher usually gives all his attention to the discussion of a few typical weaknesses or typical evidences of strength. There is no over-magnifying of details — if the pupil has neglected them he is hastily ridiculed or completely ignored — and there is little turning aside to matters that are only incidental. Almost all effort is

## 82 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

directed upon a few essential matters that are vital to large per cent of the class.

The method of criticism is significant, secondly, because of its genuinely constructive nature. Teachers, as a rule, do not content themselves with showing pupils how their work is faulty or weak or uninteresting, but point out clearly how they might be made better. Prevailing faults are dealt with, most certainly; but much more time is devoted to pointing out qualities that are good. Frequently the teacher's work is put alongside good work, so that the pupils may more readily just how far the one is from the other. Sometimes the comparison is humiliating to one of the pupils, but the teacher seems to worry very little about that fact. He wants the comparison to have its full force. Neither does he group all the grades of the better pupils between 90 and 92 $\frac{7}{8}$ .<sup>1</sup> He does not deal harshly with the pupil who because of little ability cannot do well; but he does not try to conceal anyone's weakness. His purpose is to lead all the pupils of the class to do better the next time, and if one boy's fault will be of service to himself or his classmates in future work, the teacher's sensitiveness about "hurting some one's feelings" is not likely to stand in the way. He points out pitfalls, and he dwells upon the good qualities that individual themes possess. Then he is almost certain to follow a plan of rebuilding that is recommended in the *Instructions*<sup>2</sup> for secondary teachers. In this he and the pupils bring together the good qualities of the themes they have been read, and the teacher's and the pupils' best notions of what a theme ought to be, and fuse them into a kind of ideal theme, so that every pupil may see how good

<sup>1</sup> Most teachers, I noticed, graded work on the basis of 20, and it was not unusual to see the grades range from 4 or 6 to 18 or 19. Usually each pupil was required to stand up when the teacher announced his grade.

<sup>2</sup> Page 82.

the work would be if it were the result of the combined intelligence of the class. Thus no pupil is left with the crushing conviction that there is no direction in which he may improve himself.

### C. THE SPIRIT OF THE CRITICISM

The spirit of the classroom criticism is at once sympathetic and stimulating. It cannot be said to be arbitrary, yet it is not so vague or indefinite or "broad" that it loses its force. If the matter under consideration at a given time admits of positive decision, the teacher renders the decision and the case ends there. If it is a question of good or better, or bad or worse, and the teacher expresses his opinion, he ordinarily explains his position. But in all cases of mere opinion, pupils are encouraged to follow their own reasoning or their own feeling; and if they do not agree with the teacher, they usually have the utmost liberty in expressing their dissent. The result is an exceedingly frank and open relation between pupil and teacher and between pupil and pupil. The boy is sure to feel that the teacher remembers how perplexing it is to learn to write; but he seldom has reason for believing that the teacher will be a substitute for his own power of thinking. He is expected to use his own intelligence and he must measure it not only with the intelligence of his classmates but with that of his teacher. I frequently saw classes so thoroughly in earnest about some question growing out of their written exercises that it was with difficulty that the teacher prevented all the members from speaking at once. Perhaps as frequently I saw the boys in the class stand unanimously, or almost unanimously, against the teacher; and they took a respectful delight in putting him on the defensive. Fortunately he was usually so well prepared to defend himself that he

## 84 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

accepted their challenge gladly, and without the slight loss of temper put them to their wit's end in an effort to maintain their position. This characteristic kind of criticism is, then, neither deadening nor consoling. It is a kind of good-natured warfare in which there is enough of the sting of battle to keep one active, and enough reward to make the participants feel that they are moving forward. I have never seen a better means of making advanced pupils feel that writing is a vital question of conscience which everyone must in a large measure settle for himself.

### D. ECONOMY IN GRADING THEMES

Conscientious criticism of this kind makes great demands upon a teacher's energy and time; there is no denying the fact. It seems to be clearly understood by French teachers of the mother tongue that the grading of themes implies long hours of patient labor. I found one teacher who professed to believe that anybody could discover a "royal incline" that would save one from the annoyance of serious effort. There seemed to be a definite feeling that only the very simplest labor-saving devices are worth while. I saw no magical methods of having pupils improve their writing while the themes were carefully concealed in the teacher's desk until they were forgotten — by both pupils and teacher; I discovered no complicated systems of symbols and exponents as a substitute for corrections or even conferences; and I saw no idealistic schemes of having the pupils themselves or the teachers in other departments help to grade the papers submitted in classes in the mother tongue. Pupils frequently grade one another's themes, but the exercise is designed primarily to help the pupils rather than the teacher. The great

heavy burden of theme-reading is regarded by teachers as one of the inevitable but fruitful duties of their profession.

There are, however, a number of things that serve to economize the teacher's energy and to render his work much less disagreeable than most American teachers of English think theme-reading must always be. In the first place, because of the exacting drill to which the pupil has been submitted in his early life, his themes are not so full of faults. Then, as we shall see in Chapter VII, the French teacher, with the exception of the lower grade teacher in the primary school system, is not obliged to work so many hours a week that he has no spare time for marking written exercises. Again, he does not look upon theme-correcting as a disgraceful kind of drudgery that ought to be heaped upon some one who has not the ambition or the intelligence to do the less strictly routine part of the teacher's work. This wholesome attitude in itself tends to make the reading less irksome. Then, too, the broad training which teachers have received gives them a rich background that is especially serviceable in marking themes. Finally, and chiefly, the French teacher saves himself almost immeasurably by the careful preparation he requires the pupils to make before they begin writing. Instead of leaving a score of questions unsettled when he assigns a subject, he suggests, warns, and, through the methods I have already mentioned, brings the pupils to foresee and guard against a great many errors that otherwise would rise up for treatment after the themes had been submitted. Aside from the unmistakable influence that these pre-writing discussions have upon a pupil's habit of thought, they save the teacher an overwhelming amount of unnecessary labor.

## 86 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

### V. THE WRITING AND SPEAKING IN OTHER SUBJECTS

The value of the training the French boy receives in his courses in composition is increased materially by the character of the writing he is required to do in other subjects. It would be exaggeration, assuredly, to say that his writing in these other subjects is always done just as carefully as that which he submits to his teacher of composition; and it would be just as great an overstatement to say that every teacher of mathematics, botany, and history is as much interested in the character of his pupils' writing as he is in the subject he teaches. Nevertheless, the quality of this writing which is done as a part of the work in other classes receives a degree of attention from both pupil and teacher that in America may be found only in unusual instances. Teachers in France would protest against the assertion that they had attained an ideal condition in this respect; many of them feel, as we feel in America, that other departments too often neglect the quality of pupils' language. Yet when one compares the practices of the two countries, one cannot refrain from felicitating the teacher of the mother tongue in France upon the more conscientious, more intelligent support he receives from his colleagues in other fields of study. The result is not difficult to see. When the boy is obliged to write well in his other courses, he sooner or later reaches the conclusion that all writing is important. He therefore not only gains from the thoughtful practice which he carries on in history, civics, and physics or botany, but he derives new profit from his instruction in composition. His teacher of the mother tongue ceases to be a person who is paid to talk about something that is unimportant except to himself, and becomes a person of consequence who can help one in doing what everybody seems to think is worth doing well.

A large part of this outside writing is done in the general notebook that every pupil in the lower and middle grades is required to keep. In it, as was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the boy writes almost everything save his regular compositions, which are written on theme paper or in a special set of composition books. Assignments for the following day, the solution of problems in arithmetic, lessons in vocabulary, experiments in elementary science, dictations in the mother tongue, lessons in grammar, questions on the reading lesson for the succeeding day, lessons in orthography, lessons in geography, and maxims upon which pupils might ponder with profit, — all these are copied in the general notebook. A series of these books, then, constitutes a rather complete record of a pupil's daily school life; and, as might be supposed, the amount of writing which their preparation requires is considerable. One set which I brought away with me consists of sixteen well-filled notebooks of thirty good-sized pages each, or nearly five hundred pages in all. These were written by a boy of thirteen in the course of one school year. Now it may be seen readily that this writing, if done under any reasonably favorable circumstances, would give a boy much practice in expressing himself correctly and clearly. When, however, he writes with the full conviction that his work will be examined critically, the value of the practice is greatly increased. He knows that the teacher will call for his book from time to time and mark it up with red ink very much as if it were a theme; so he writes carefully. In the course of four or five years, then, the notebooks cannot fail to be of unquestioned value in forming habits of natural, thoughtful expression.

The occasional papers in other courses, and the notebooks required in advanced classes in certain subjects, likewise

## 88 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

receive care. I was especially impressed by the neatness and accuracy with which the students in the normal-school classes did all of their writing. I noticed, moreover, that many of the corrections on advanced papers had to do with the organization of the material and with smaller questions of clearness. Furthermore, I had the refreshing experience on a few occasions of seeing the teacher of civics, ethics, or philosophy call a seventeen-year-old boy to the floor, read from a paper he had submitted, and ask him what he really meant when he expressed himself in that manner. If the pupil then explained himself clearly, the teacher would demand why he did not make himself understood in the first place. And if the fault was inappropriateness rather than vagueness or obscurity, the criticism was scarcely less severe. In fact, whatever the prevailing faults of expression, there seemed to be no assurance for the pupil that the teacher would, by passing over them habitually, permit himself to undo the work of the teacher of composition and literature.

The critical attitude toward all of the pupil's written work is maintained also toward his speech. This fact was brought to my notice in a striking manner the first time I visited a class in science. The pupils, most of them aged nine, were having a first lesson in geography. In the course of the discussion, the teacher asked one of the boys to describe a volcano. The little fellow said in his descriptive explanation that the volcano built a mountain of itself shaped "like this," indicating the cone-form with his hands. The teacher reprimanded him sharply for resorting to such a makeshift, and suggested that he be thoughtful enough in the future to express himself in words. If I had encountered no other cases, I might have thought this only the whim of an extremely sensitive teacher. But as I visited other classes in a variety of subjects, I came to see that most

French teachers have a well-developed conscience in respect to such matters. They do not drive a boy to abandon spontaneous speech, but they do insist that he make clear-cut, straightforward answers, and that they be phrased in reasonably acceptable language.

#### VI. SUMMARY

The attention, then, that the actual business of writing receives in the French schools is a matter not only of adequate instruction, but of full and definite practice under stimulating circumstances. Composition is held up as a very important part — in fact, the most important part — of the course in the mother tongue. Studies in vocabulary and practice in dictation are carried on constantly in the lower grades in order that the boy may express himself without hindrance when he is once old enough to have something of his own to say in organized compositions. The material assigned is regarded as a matter of great moment. It is intended to develop, in order, the powers of attention and observation, the imagination, and habits of reflection. This material, moreover, is almost invariably discussed in the classroom until the pupil is awakened and interested; and when he writes upon it, he must give the most thoughtful care to organization and general good form. In the criticism of themes, oral discussion holds a large place. Furthermore, the teacher makes his critical suggestions distinctly constructive; that is, he emphasizes the difference between poor work and good, and he leads the pupils to reflect upon the possibilities that the subject-matter possesses, rather than upon the magnitude of their own shortcomings. And finally, the training that pupils receive in the study of the mother tongue is reënforced to no small degree by the work in other subjects.

## CHAPTER IV

### GRAMMAR

ACTUAL practice is the chief means by which the French boy learns to write; but it is not the sole means. It is only the center about which other good influences are built. In general, the French teacher is not afraid to give the boy a little supplementary, buttressing knowledge, whether or not it promises to be immediately "practical"; so he does not content himself to let the pupil grope along in his writing without some organized information concerning the language he attempts to employ. Grammar, therefore, is taught. And by grammar I do not mean predigested "language lessons," but real grammar that treats openly, and without apology, such principles as render language relations both intelligible and serviceable. The *Instructions* issued by the Minister make the general attitude toward the teaching of grammar unmistakably clear: "French is a living language which is known poorly if it is learned merely by usage. The study of grammar is, then, a necessity."<sup>1</sup>

#### I. THE PREDOMINANT PURPOSE IN TEACHING GRAMMAR

The chief purpose in teaching grammar is nowise vague or pedagogically mysterious; it is to help the boy to gain a better working acquaintance with the language he speaks and writes. The value of grammatical exercises as training, as a means of developing the power to discriminate, to judge, is not disregarded or underestimated; but the chief

<sup>1</sup> *Instructions*, p. 72.

aim is a mastery of the tools of everyday expression. Although it is not believed by anyone — so far as I was able to learn — that a knowledge of grammatical principles will inevitably lead one to speak or write correctly, it is generally maintained that this knowledge, if acquired under favorable conditions, is of some definite value as a part of the pupil's equipment for effective expression.

## II. THE EARLY BEGINNING

This definite purpose in teaching grammar goes far in determining when the pupil must begin its study. If grammar is to be of value at all to the pupil when he writes, so French teachers explain, he must study its elements while he is young, and he must master a few things so thoroughly that they cease to be mere knowledge and become habit and feeling. Instruction, therefore, begins early. The boy of six or seven is mastering the simpler tenses of *être* (*to be*) and *avoir* (*to have*), and by the time he has reached the age of eight or nine, he is able to discuss the function of the different parts of speech and to talk in grammatical terms about the simpler forms of the sentence. As a rule, French teachers seem not to be proud of the distinction they have had in the past of being called the best grammarians in the world; they seem to feel that the compliment carries a suggestion that they are overnice about matters of usage. But they have not, as a consequence, been led from the belief that a little grammar is good for a boy's writing. They take the position that if a boy has anything to say, his ability to say it well must eventually depend in large measure upon his skill in handling the sentence, and that this skill must come in part from deep-seated, long-established knowledge of sentence elements. If a boy is to resist the bad language influences of the street, he must have adequate

## 92 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

knowledge with which to fortify the good habits that he forms at school or at home. Thus it comes to pass that the boy not only knows how to write a sentence, but he knows when he has written one, and he can think about it in terms that are immediately clear and that are serviceable to him in thinking about all other sentences.

The advantage of beginning while the pupil is young does not end, however, with the early formation of good language habits. If boys and girls of thirteen or fourteen could form new habits or acquire new knowledge about language easily, there would still be a very good pedagogical reason why they should begin the study of grammar while they are young. When grammar is postponed until the boy is in the seventh or eighth grade, or possibly in the high school, he has come to look upon his studies as so many courses to take. Grammar, therefore, may readily seem to be some new subject as foreign to his everyday life as solid geometry or ancient history. And when grammar is for this reason dull and dry, nothing, it seems, could be duller or drier. The teacher, as well as the pupil, looks upon it as "formal grammar" or "technical grammar," and they unite in wishing it had never found its way into the school course. Now when a boy begins as soon as he enters school, and hears grammar and lessons in grammar always associated with writing, speaking, and reading, he accepts the study as a very natural part of his work in the mother tongue; and as his lessons become more substantial and more complex in the progress of his school career, he never arrives at the point where he is obliged to take up "the subject of grammar." Consequently he has no opportunity to feel that he is about to study something so obviously useless that he has been able to "get along" without it all these years.

### III. SIMPLIFICATION

The clearly conceived purpose of teaching grammar for its effect upon the pupil's expression, and the consequent belief that the study should begin early, explain in large degree the simplification of grammatical subject-matter and method that has been taking place in France recently. France, to a greater extent than America, passed through a period when grammar was a cumbersome, difficult subject. Yet French teachers seem to have agreed much more generally than Americans that the older formal grammar possessed real value, in spite of the fact that it was sometimes loaded down with many things either non-essential or positively injurious. In their reforms, then, instead of discarding grammar completely, or almost completely, as was done in many states in our own country, they tried to eliminate the unimportant and the injurious and keep the valuable. As the strongly fortified traditions in grammar-teaching began to give way, educators came to see that though an endless array of close distinctions and obscure exceptions might serve to keep a boy at work and test his powers of endurance, a much simpler study might easily be of more value as a means of influencing speech and writing. The process of simplification, assuredly, is not completed; and the character of the French language makes it impossible to carry the process as far as it might be carried in English. Yet with comparatively few exceptions, French teachers approve what has been done and express the belief that many other changes might be brought about profitably.

#### A. IN SUBJECT-MATTER

This simplification is noticeable, first, in the subject-matter taught. As was suggested in the preceding paragraph, the emphasis has been shifted. Instead of devoting

## 94 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

much time to exercises in hair-splitting distinctions, the teacher dwells at great length upon a few principles that are easily understood and easily observed in everyday speech. The nature of the simple proposition, the functions of words in ordinary sentences, the most used tenses of familiar verbs, the complete conjugation of the regular verbs and some of the most frequently used irregular verbs, and the sequence of tenses, — these are the matters that are dwelt upon throughout the earlier years of a pupil's school life. And when he enters upon the latter half of his course — if he continues his work as far as the baccalaureate or through the higher primary school — he is sure to have, in addition to his more detailed exercises in syntax, frequent reviews of what he has studied in the lower grades. After one has visited classes for several months, and has seen so much time devoted to these concentrated lessons, it is easy to understand why the French boy so rarely makes an egregious grammatical blunder after he is ten or twelve years of age. To be sure, French grammar-teaching was effective before the subject was simplified; but only in recent years has the good influence been stripped of a large part of its dead weight.

### B. IN CLASSROOM EXERCISES

In the second place, the simplification has affected the processes of teaching. The emphasis in the presentation of the simplified subject-matter has been centered very largely in a few groups of comparatively simple exercises. Inasmuch as the purpose seems to be always to have the pupil become trained in seeing the elements of a normal sentence without studious hesitation, these frequent exercises deal ordinarily with the simpler kind of structure. The pupil completes sentences by supplying omitted parts; he turns the plural words into singulars, or conversely; he changes

the masculine nouns into feminines, which in French necessitates many other changes; he substitutes pronouns for the nouns not only in one sentence, but in a series of sentences; he changes the tense (preserving the correct sequence) of the verbs in a paragraph; he turns infinitive and participial constructions into finite verb constructions; he makes declarative sentences interrogative, an exercise which in French requires no little practice; he turns direct discourse into indirect, and conversely; and he has almost constant practice in the simpler kinds of analysis. This analysis is well designed to give the pupil a firm hold on organization and structure. It is not expressed by any scheme of diagramming — at least I did not see any such device used — and only the essential relations are treated. Usually when the teacher or pupil writes a sentence on the black-board, its construction is indicated in some such manner as follows:

Since the Gauls had established their camp beyond the Anio, the Roman army departed from the city and halted on this side of the river.

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Since the Gauls had established<br>their camp beyond the Anio | Subordinate proposition               |
| 2. the Roman army departed<br>from the city                      | Principal proposition                 |
| 3. and halted on this<br>side of the river                       | Principal proposition<br>(Coördinate) |

And if the function of the individual words in the sentence is indicated in writing, it is in some equally simple manner.

It is not difficult to see that regular practice in these fundamental matters makes it almost certain that the pupil will be able to handle the sentence with readiness and sureness. He is exercised not only in the so-called mechanics of language, but in processes of thought; and the result is reflected not merely in his ability to see the structure of what he reads, but in his power to visualize what he himself thinks.

## C. IN NOMENCLATURE

The simplification has recently been extended to grammatical nomenclature. In France, as in America, there was formerly much confusion in the nomenclature employed in textbooks. Like us, the French teachers sought relief; but with more immediate success. Here is an instance where the close organization of the school system has made national reform a comparatively easy matter. When the Minister became convinced that action in respect to nomenclature should be taken, he secured through his professional advisers and many of the best teachers of the mother tongue the most nearly satisfactory scheme possible. Then he issued an *arrêté* (July, 1910) which set forth the terms adopted, and ordered that they be applied in examinations for the baccalaureate the year following. Immediately all the publishers in the country pasted green or red key-pages in their textbooks, and within a few months they were issuing editions bearing the words: "Revised according to the *arrêté* concerning grammatical nomenclature." This change has been generally accepted as a long step in the direction of a satisfactory unification, it has wrought no great hardship, and it has necessitated no sacrifice of individuality. Authors of textbooks and teachers are at liberty to resort to as much ingenuity as they choose in treating the details of grammar, but there must be uniformity of name in all fundamental matters. The *arrêté* has simply put into practice the common sense that if a brick is a brick, both Smith and Jones should call it that. The scheme, which we must remember was evolved for the French language, not ours, is printed below.

## THE PARTS OF SPEECH

## THE NOUN

Classification of nouns .....	{ 1. Proper nouns. 2. Common nouns (simple or compound).
Number of nouns .....	Singular — plural.
Gender of nouns .....	Masculine — feminine.

## THE ARTICLE

Classification of articles .....	{ 1. Definite article. 2. Indefinite article. 3. Partitive article.
----------------------------------	---

## THE PRONOUN

Classification of pronouns .....	{ 1. Personal and reflexive. 2. Possessive. 3. Demonstrative. 4. Relative. 5. Interrogative. 6. Indefinite.
----------------------------------	--

Person and number of pronouns .....	Singular — plural.
Gender of pronouns .....	Masculine — feminine — neuter.
Case of pronouns .....	Subject case — complement case.
N.B. — By <i>case</i> is understood the forms that certain pronouns take according as they are subject or complement.	

## THE ADJECTIVE

Number .....	Singular — plural.
Gender .....	Masculine — feminine.

Classification of adjectives	1. Qualifying adjectives (simple and compound)	{ a. Comparative of equality. b. Comparative of superiority. c. Comparative of inferiority. d. Relative superlative. e. Absolute superlative.
	2. Numeral adjectives	{ a. Ordinal. b. Cardinal.
	3. Possessive adjectives.	
	4. Demonstrative adjectives.	
	5. Interrogative adjectives.	
	6. Indefinite adjectives.	

## 98 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

### THE VERB

Verbs and verbal expressions.

Number and person.

Elements of the verb { 1. Root.  
2. Termination.

Auxiliary verbs ..... *Avoir* (*to have*) — *être* (*to be*), etc.

Forms of the verb ... { 1. Active.  
2. Passive.  
3. Pronominal.

Moods of the verb ... { 1. Personal moods .. { a. Indicative.  
b. Conditional.  
c. Imperative.  
d. Subjunctive.  
2. Impersonal moods { a. Infinitive.  
b. Participle.

Tenses of the verb ... { 1. The present.  
2. The past ..... { a. The imperfect.  
b. The simple past —  
the compound past.  
c. The past anterior.  
d. The pluperfect.  
3. The future ..... { a. Simple future.  
b. Future anterior.

Impersonal verbs.

### CONJUGATION

The verbs of the active form are ranged in three groups:

1. Verbs of the type of *aimer*: the present in *e*.

2. Verbs of the type of *finir* { present in *is*.  
participle in *issant*.

3. All other verbs.

### WORDS INVARIABLE IN FORM

Adverbs and adverbial expressions.

Prepositions and prepositional expressions.

Conjunctions and con- { 1. Conjunctions of coördination.  
juncional expressions { 2. Conjunctions of subordination.

Interjections.

## SYNTAX

## THE PROPOSITION

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Terms of the proposition  | {<br>1. Subject.<br>2. Verb.<br>3. Attribute.<br>4. Complement.       |
| Uses of the noun .....    | {<br>1. Subject.<br>2. Appositive.<br>3. Attribute.<br>4. Complement. |
| Uses of the adjective ... | {<br>1. Epithet.<br>2. Attribute.                                     |

## THE COMPLEMENTS

Nearly all words may have complements. They are:

1. Complements of the noun.
2. Complements of the adjective.
3. Complements of the verb: complements direct and indirect.

## CLASSIFICATION OF PROPOSITIONS

1. Independent propositions.
2. Principal propositions.
3. Subordinate propositions.

N.B. — Either principal or subordinate propositions may be coördinate.

- Propositions may have functions analogous to the functions of nouns. They may be .....
- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| ..... | {<br>1. Subject proposition.<br>2. Appositive proposition.<br>3. Attributive proposition.<br>4. Complementary proposition. |
|-------|--|

## IV. THE CLOSE RELATION OF GRAMMAR TO OTHER WORK

The simplification of grammar, important as it must be, is not, however, the most essential or the most significant part of present-day teaching in France. It is quite possible for grammar to be simple in every respect, yet be so far removed from a boy's life that he finds no value in the simplification. In providing against such a possible defect, the French teacher has made probably his greatest contribution to the teaching of the subject. Grammar is not taught as a

thing apart. The pupil is made to feel that the subject is vitally related to his other studies, to his writing, to his everyday speech,—in fact, to his whole intellectual life. In this manner, grammar is robbed of its chief terrors and is made to hold a very normal place in a boy's pursuits.

#### A. THROUGH THE INTERNAL ARRANGEMENT OF CLASS PERIODS

Evidence of this close relation is first seen in the internal arrangement of class periods devoted to the mother tongue. I did not see one recitation in grammar that extended beyond fifteen or twenty minutes. It seems to be taken for granted everywhere that a normal boy cannot survive a very long lesson in grammar. Consequently, he is led through an active, stimulating exercise lasting only a quarter of an hour, and then his attention is directed to something else. Not only does this kind of lesson prevent grammar itself from becoming dull, but it enables the teacher to relate grammatical principles to whatever other studies in the mother tongue he may take up for the remainder of the hour. Whether the pupils read an author, write a theme, or criticise themes read to them, there is much opportunity for the teacher to say, "There is an instance of the very thing we were talking about"; or "In this case, some other grammatical construction would have been acceptable"; or "You see what that writer did when he was confronted with that difficulty."

There appears to be no rigidly established order of the different parts of a recitation that includes grammar, but from the notes I made while visiting classes it would seem that most teachers have the lesson in grammar at the beginning of the hour. This arrangement is well justified, not only because the pupils are fresh from a period of recreation,

but also because the grammar is thus related to the remainder of the recitation with greater ease than if it came after the reading or composition. Perhaps I ought to explain that the meeting-points do not necessarily grow out of premeditation; the teacher's comments in many cases are only the thought of the moment. But the simple fact that he is provided with an opportunity to point out examples of grammatical principles so recently discussed makes such a division of the hour seem much more fruitful than a full hour of grammar once a week. The following plans of an hour's recitation are typical:<sup>1</sup>

- (1) (a) The grammatical analysis (for verbs) of about twenty lines of good French prose.  
(b) The reading of one of Prudhomme's poems. In the discussion of the literary qualities of this poem, the teacher explained two grammatical problems.  
(c) The reading of a pleasant story by the teacher,—an exercise which the pupils enjoyed thoroughly.
- (2) (a) The study of a poem assigned two days before.  
(b) A lesson in grammar on the agreement of the pronoun and past participle.  
(c) The preliminary explanation of the reading lesson that is to be studied in class a day or two later.
- (3) (a) The grammatical analysis of ten lines of prose.  
(b) The recitation, from memory, of one of La Fontaine's *Fables*.  
(c) The reading and criticising of written exercises that the teacher had graded.
- (4) (a) A short lesson in the textbook on grammar; then the study of two or three sentences that presented characteristic difficulties.  
(b) The recitation of André Chénier's *La Jeune Captive*.  
(c) The reading and study of two selections in prose that dealt with the same period of the Revolution.

<sup>1</sup> Printed as I recorded them in notes made in the classroom.

### B. THROUGH ORAL EXERCISES

The lessons in grammar are brought close to a boy's life, too, by the fact that they are almost exclusively oral. The teacher sometimes records in detail on the blackboard the recitation the pupils make, but the pupils themselves rarely ever write; they must define, discuss, and analyze orally. A number of reasons are offered for this practice. One is that it enables the class to cover more ground than would be possible if the recitation were written. Another is that the pupil ought to think more rapidly in analyzing sentence than he possibly can do in writing out the analysis. Still another is that since a pupil normally speaks so much more than he writes, most of the practice should be in speaking. But the greatest reason seems to be that an oral recitation is full of activity. In every subject taught in the elementary schools, activity is constantly encouraged. Teachers try to make a pupil's knowledge an inseparable part of himself. And in the study of grammar this theory seems to be put into practice with more than usual effect. When the boy is alert and closely intent on the matter in hand, all impressions are sure to be deeper and consequently more permanent than if he were laboriously writing out relations which he can see in an instant but which he must hold in mind while he writes out an entire sentence, or even two or three. In speaking or in writing down one's thoughts, one must feel grammatical relations immediately. There must be no delay to annoy a hearer or to permit the evasive spirit of thought to steal from the writer's mind. The grammar must be a part of the thought itself. To bring a pupil into such a condition of mind requires just the kind of instantaneous thinking that he is obliged to do in well-planned exercises that are almost exclusively oral.

### C. THROUGH THE USE OF COMPLETE PASSAGES OF PROSE

The grammar lesson itself is usually based upon some more or less complete passage of prose that is drawn from the boy's reading. He is not, then, tempted to believe that grammar is something that has to do only with special sentences chosen to fit into a textbook. He sees that a passage which has interest and charm as literature is at the same time subject to grammatical laws, and often cannot be completely comprehended without the application of these laws.

It is needless to say that the passage intended for the grammar lesson proper must be selected with care. It is not full of technical difficulties that might draw a pupil away from the real center of the lesson; and it is chosen for the immediate appeal that the subject-matter ought to make. Here, as in the giving of dictations, the first duty of the teacher is to ascertain that the pupils comprehend. He reads the passage for a given lesson, explains it fully, and helps every boy not only to understand but to appreciate. Let me give an example. In a typical recitation that I visited, the teacher wrote on the blackboard during intermission the following passage from Daudet:

Poor Man!

It was in honor of this last recitation that he had put on his good Sunday clothes. And now I understood why those old people from the village were sitting there at the end of the room. It all seemed to say that they were sorry not to have come oftener to this school. It was also a way of thanking the teacher for his forty years of good service, and of showing their respect for the fatherland which was slipping away.<sup>1</sup>

When the class — a class of nine-year-old boys — were in their seats ready for the recitation, the teacher read the

<sup>1</sup> Translated from *La dernière classe*.

paragraph through. Then he called upon several boys in turn to read. Inasmuch as the class had been reading Daudet in some of their lessons, they were immediately interested in this passage, and the boys who read aloud showed by the intelligence and spirit of their reading that they understood and enjoyed all the writer said. Next the teacher called upon several boys to explain the least familiar words, so that no one in the class might have only a vague or indefinite understanding of the paragraph. In every instance he insisted that the definition be complete and exact. After this preliminary study, the teacher took up the lesson in grammar. To begin with, he called for all the nouns in the paragraph. This, of course, for boys who had already received instruction in grammar, even though they were only nine years old, was an easy task. Then he called for the adjectives, and as the boys indicated them, he underscored them on the blackboard. Finally, he and the pupils talked simply and familiarly about the verbs and the subjects of the sentences. It was not difficult to see that the pupils understood, and that they understood in terms of grammar. Yet in the entire twenty minutes of recitation — the rest of the hour was devoted to dictation and reading — there was not the slightest suggestion of over-technical phraseology or disagreeable abstractions; there was nothing to lead the pupil to believe that grammar was a thing apart.

To be sure, exercises of this kind vary according to the age of the pupils, the teacher's preferences, the character of the particular passage chosen for study, and the nature of the work that is to occupy the class during the remainder of the hour. Sometimes, too, the teacher modifies or withdraws some part of the text so that the purpose of the lesson may stand out clearly. For example, when one teacher dictated

a passage from a translation of Franklin's *Autobiography*,<sup>1</sup> he gave the pupils only the infinitive form of the verbs, and then asked them to study and master, as a part of their next day's lesson, certain tenses in the conjugation of these verbs. The original text will serve to show the chief purpose of this assignment:

There was a salt-marsh that *bounded* part of the millpond, on the edge of which, at high water, we used to stand and fish for minnows. By much trampling, we had made it a mere quagmire. My proposal was to build a wharf there fit for us *to stand* upon, and I *showed* my comrades a large heap of stones, which *were intended* for a new house near the marsh, and which would very well *suit* our purpose. Accordingly, in the evening, when the workmen were gone, I *assembled* a number of my playfellows, and *working* with them diligently like so many emmets, sometimes two or three to a stone, we *brought* them all away and *built* our little wharf. The next morning the workmen were surprised at *missing* the stones, which were found in our wharf. Inquiry was made after the removers; we *were discovered* and *complained of*; several of us *were corrected* by our fathers; and though I *pleaded* the usefulness of the work, mine *convinced* me that nothing was useful which was not honest.

But it mattered not how a passage was treated in a given instance, it was always put into its original form before the end of the lesson. There was no effort to revise literature simply "to make it parse." The pupils were always reminded that, after all, they were dealing with a piece of good literature and not a cut-to-order grammar lesson.

One objection might be made to this method; namely, that it injures or kills the boy's interest in literature. We have heard much in recent years about the criminal conduct of the teacher who dares to discuss the so-called mechanics of a good piece of prose; we are told that to talk about the grammar of a passage from Stevenson or Ruskin or Newman is "literary murder." But why? Does the artist, even the least effective artist, see less in the great

<sup>1</sup> Franklin's *Autobiography* is widely used in the French schools.

picture because he knows technique and structure, and speaks in terms of his art? Does the playwright or the architect see less in the play or the public building because he has found it possible to "reconcile technique with emotion"? Neither reason nor exame give an affirmative reply. In truth, the French boy seems to increase the boy's interest distinctly, ~~g~~ him to see the structure of what he reads. And why should he not? Perhaps everyone who reads this paragraph knows of teachers who spend long months in saying that the structure or the language of a piece is beautiful, and contributes, therefore, to the beauty of the subject-matter, yet who do not help a pupil to enough knowledge of language to enable him to distinguish one kind of effect from another. He does not know that the infinitive construction is characteristically loose, for example, because he does not recognize an infinitive construction when he sees it; he does not note the effects of grammatical inversion because — sad to relate — he cannot tell whether a sentence is inverted or not. Grammar, it must be admitted, may, like other sciences, be so poorly taught that everything it touches will be blighted. But, on the other hand, if the subject-matter is in itself interesting, and if the teacher uses good judgment in stopping short of overminute distinctions, a pupil's knowledge of the structure of a passage must inevitably contribute to a more intelligent appreciation.

#### D. THROUGH EMPHASIS ON THE SENTENCE

The relation of the grammar lesson to the boy's reading and speaking is made firmer by the fact that in all the exercises beyond the very first ones in the beginning classes, the sentence, rather than any smaller element, is the unit of study. The parts of speech are not neglected, but the

emphasis is so unmistakably fixed on the sentence that the pupil is in little danger of regarding the parts of speech as anything more than "parts." In analysis, which includes what we call parsing, the exercises are so shorn of unnecessary searching for fine distinctions, and in other respects are so simplified, that the importance of the sentence as a unit is sure to stand out predominantly. And even in the study of conjugations, the sentence seems always to be kept in the forefront. Pupils almost invariably recited:

We have our umbrellas under our arms.  
You have your umbrellas under your arms.  
They have their umbrellas under their arms.

Or they employed a compound sentence:

We saw the danger and warned our brother.<sup>1</sup>  
You saw the danger and warned your brother.  
They saw the danger and warned their brother.

This kind of conjugation, it might be said in passing, is regularly employed, too, in the classes in English. It must account in no small measure for the French boy's ability to use such English verbs as *sit* and *set* and *lie* and *lay* with surprising accuracy. In any event, it contributes to his feeling that in all language study the sentence is the grammatical unit of greatest importance.

#### V. THE INFLUENCE OF THE INDUCTIVE METHOD

The dominant purpose in teaching grammar, that is, to give it permanent, practical value for the pupil in all his language study and in his speech and writing, is partly the result but chiefly the cause of one pronounced tendency in classroom method. From what we may have heard of the characteristics of the French education of three or four decades ago, or from current notions of the importance of

<sup>1</sup> The English, of course, does not show the verb changes of the French.

such a body as the French Academy, it might be inferred that the teaching of a subject like grammar would be by means of ironclad rule. Such, however, is not the case. Everywhere there is a tendency to get farther and farther away from the arbitrary and take what we in America have chosen to call the "scientific attitude." The study of the mother tongue, it is maintained, should be in very large part the observation of language phenomena. Thus the inductive method has grown steadily into the teaching of grammar, and at present there is much discussion of the advisability of extending it still farther. The extreme position of a method that is wholly inductive is maintained by some teachers, notably Professor Brunot, of the Sorbonne. He sums up his argument in the following words: "Language is a social fact: like all social phenomena, it is the product of the past. . . . Language is not a deliberate, premeditated creation: grammar is not a form of logic but a science of observation, which ought to spring from inductions and not deductions."<sup>1</sup> On account of Professor Brunot's scholarship, and the fact that he is one of the authors of a well-known series of textbooks for schools,<sup>2</sup> his expression of belief has received serious consideration; and his views have contributed materially to the progress of induction.

It seems to be more generally believed, however, that though the inductive method is the only acceptable method in language investigation and the establishment of the laws of grammar, it is not practicable in the classroom when adopted in its entirety. To begin with, it is regarded as too unwieldy. Again, it consumes entirely too much time. If a pupil is to follow the direction of his teacher in making one

<sup>1</sup> *L'Enseignement de la Langue française*, pp. 51 f.

<sup>2</sup> Brunot et Bony, *Méthode de Langue française*. Librairie Armand Colin.

observation, then another, and another, until he finally arrives at a conclusion or principle, he must of necessity leave many important grammatical questions untouched simply because he has not time enough. Then a third objection is offered. It is maintained that the purely inductive method is unnecessary; that a modified form is really more effective in the practical work of the recitation. The value of induction is not underestimated, but according to those who hold this last view — and they are many — it should be used only to keep the pupil aware that the principles he studies are based on real usage; that is, induction should be employed in combination with deduction. Thus it comes about that one sees in the schools a certain amount of textbook study combined with a greater amount of direct observation of the language as it is used; and that in a given classroom when the teacher is trying to fix a definition or a principle in the pupil's mind, he begins with an example, next explains the definition, and then concludes with another example.<sup>1</sup> In this manner the boy is made to see the justification of the definition or principle, and the teacher saves much of the time that the purely inductive method would consume.

All in all, the influence of the inductive method has served to relate grammatical study to the pupil's entire life. Moreover, it has clarified and rendered intelligent, in a score of different ways, the attitude of teacher and pupil toward grammatical problems. The observation of language phenomena has led the teacher to see that he must not be dogmatic in questions of disputed usage. It has led him, too, to take an intelligent view of exceptions. His pupils, as a result, come to understand the relation of exceptions to rules in a living language. They see that the

<sup>1</sup> This method is prescribed for secondary schools. See *Instructions*, p. 72.

## 110 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

rules are not instruments of torture, but conveniences that have been derived from language as it lives and grows. The teacher finds, too, that emphasis should be placed upon the observation of idioms. One of the most interesting classes I visited was that of a teacher who was explaining to boys of ten or eleven in the most illuminating manner that some of the expressions in the lesson could not be taken apart in the process of analysis, but that they must be considered as little units in themselves. Then he showed that every language has its own peculiar turns of phrase, and gave some good examples of Gallicisms, Anglicisms, and Latinisms. I saw many recitations in which similar explanations were made. In many ways, then, the pupils of the present generation in France have profited by the inductive method. Their attitude toward living language is distinctly more intelligent and more tolerant.

### VI. HISTORICAL GRAMMAR

The instruction in the grammar of present-day usage continues regularly until the boy is thirteen, fourteen, or fifteen years of age. He then has regular reviews in the subject until he leaves the *lycée* or the higher primary school at the age of seventeen or eighteen. In addition to all this work, the pupil receives instruction in the field of historical grammar. The directions of the Minister read:

"In the course of this review, he [the teacher] will compare the syntax of present-day French with that of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. On this point it would be well to recall the words of the programme of studies: 'The teacher will give, during the reading of the texts, such elements of historical grammar as may seem necessary. These elements are not to constitute the material of a regular course, and are to be given only in so

far as they contribute to a more intelligent understanding of the present-day usage of the language.''"<sup>1</sup>

These directions indicate with reasonable accuracy the scope of this work and the method employed in the classroom. It should be borne in mind that the instruction does not constitute a course in itself, yet it must not be understood that the demands on the teacher are slight. In fact, he must have a sounder training, more abundant pedagogical skill, and a more discriminating sense of fitness than if he were giving a fixed course; for he must make his observations and his explanations so opportune that the pupil will immediately feel their relevancy and force. The reading of Molière, Racine, or even La Fontaine is certain to bring up questions that will require the explanation of a great variety of grammatical changes that have taken place between the time of the author under consideration and the present. Perhaps it will seem advisable, moreover, to look backward as well as forward from that time. Then the simple question that some boy asks about an accent over a letter in a word is sufficient reason for explaining how it came to be there and over many other letters that represent the same changes. To judge whether the explanation that a given case of this kind demands should be offered in a sentence or in a five or ten minute discussion requires not only scholarship but "pedagogical sense."

It scarcely need be said that the instruction is elementary in character. Boys of fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen, even if they have had good training in the grammar of present-day usage, do not go very deeply into historical grammar. In America, where historical grammar is usually associated with the graduate school of the university, we are likely to think it quite impossible for mere schoolboys to pursue its

<sup>1</sup> *Instructions*, p. 77.

## 112 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

study with any degree of profit whatever. And it must be admitted that the young boy cannot go far. Yet, when one visits a large number of classrooms where instruction of this kind is given, one cannot fail to see that the pupils are really gaining knowledge that is of considerable importance. By the time a boy leaves the *lycée* he has learned something of the life of words, of roots, of affixes, of radicals, of tonic accent, of simple words, of derived words, of compound words; he has become acquainted with the linguistic significance of the Roman invasion, and he has had an opportunity to see how doublets have come into the language; he has discovered some of the distinguishing marks of popular and learned origins; he has gained at least some information about the dialects in the older French; he has observed the changes that the pronouns have undergone since the days when Latin was a spoken language; he has observed the importance of the auxiliaries and the conditional in French; and he has been asked to note scores of changes — perhaps each slight in itself — that have taken place within the past two centuries.<sup>1</sup>

The value of the study can scarcely be doubted. First of all, it gives the pupil a language background. He has some knowledge of the past; and if the study has served only to acquaint him with the fact that there has been a past in language, his time has been well spent. But there are other and greater values. It gives him a just notion of the nature of language. After he has received some instruction of this kind, he cannot look upon language as a thing that is fixed and unchangeable. He sees, on every hand, that changes have taken place and are always taking place. (Thus for him, grammar is no longer a collection of

<sup>1</sup> Some of the textbooks on present-day grammar include brief accounts of the growth of the language.

dogmatic rules, but a body of principles and practices that may appeal to common sense. Furthermore, a great many matters that, perchance, have perplexed him from his earliest youth are now made clear. And finally, the study arouses a healthy curiosity about language problems.<sup>1/2</sup> Pupils come to see that the history of a language may be almost as interesting as the history of the people with whose life it is closely interwoven. Thus they are led to observe; and as they observe, the grammar of everyday speech becomes more interesting and more obviously worth while.

## CHAPTER V

### READING AND LITERATURE

A FURTHER explanation of the French boy's ability to write is to be found in the kind of material he reads and the manner in which reading is done. It is not my purpose to take up all the influences that reading may have on one's style; they may be many or few. Neither do I wish to enter into a discussion of the subtle questions of pedagogy that trouble the primary teacher. I shall endeavor, instead, to point out some of the large characteristics of French method and show how these are meant to increase the boy's power of expression. We shall see what he reads, how he reads, and the condition of mind in which his reading and other exercises based on literature must almost inevitably leave him.

#### I. WHAT THE PUPIL READS

From the very first years of a boy's school life, the material he reads is of sound literary merit. The books of selections — not "readers" in our sense of the word — include the chief names in French literature, as well as a great many other authors that are at least favorably known. Every boy of nine or ten has read something from Daudet; and although his writings are extremely interesting to adults, the boy appreciates him genuinely. Then every pupil reads Victor Hugo, who in France is known as a poet rather than a prose writer, and he becomes acquainted with La Bruyère, Boileau, Chateaubriand, Joseph de Maistre, Lamartine, Michelet, Leconte de Lisle, André Theuriet, Flaubert, Vigny, Franklin (in translation), and such

present-day writers as Pierre Loti and Charles Wagner. Above all, he lives in the atmosphere of La Fontaine, whose *Fables* are exceptionally well designed for reading material, since they express in admirable form a kind of subject-matter that makes a strong appeal to boys of nine, ten, eleven, or twelve. In these authors, together with the many others that are drawn upon, may be found all the variety that the youthful mind demands.

The argument in favor of early readings from "good literature" is twofold. It is pointed out, first, that the practice saves the boy many months of valuable time in his school career. ~~Why should he~~ spend a considerable part of the best period of his life in learning to read by means of made-to-order lessons, when he might as easily, or more easily, learn by reading something of permanent value? Secondly, this good literature may be just as easy to understand as pieces that have been specially prepared for the reading-book. In truth, comprehension is frequently aided in large measure by the simplicity of structure and the artistic perfection that characterizes the best writing. It follows, then, that the pupil not only gains in time, but derives a greater pleasure, and a deeper, more abiding satisfaction than he could possibly derive from something childishly mediocre or intellectually cheap.

To the American teacher, another great advantage in this early reading of good authors should be evident. The French boy does not come to the time when he puts aside light reading and takes up the study of College Entrance Requirements or books that are labeled with some other formidable name. He is not brought to look upon the study of literature as something new and strange — as so much new ground to cover — for after he has once entered upon his school career he never arrives at the place where he

"begins to study literature." In the later years of his course, when he studies essays, fiction, drama, and poetry, he is only doing on a larger scale what he has done more or less perfectly since he first learned to read. The advanced books of selections that are obligatory in the upper grades are drawn in large part from the authors included in the more elementary books. The difference is only in the degree of maturity required in the pupil; the general character of the material is the same. And because it is the same, the pupil is prevented from experiencing any "transition" into a wholly new kind of literary study.

One question may very naturally arise: Is this reading-matter always morally wholesome in tone? Current American notions of French literature make it easy for one to imagine that French boys and girls might be asked to occupy themselves with material that is either characterless or positively sordid. But all in all, I believe the French teacher's conscience is just as sensitive in this respect as the American teacher's.<sup>1</sup> It is true that we sometimes point with disgust to a certain kind of vicious literary "art" that is called French; but it is just as true that French men and women of the better sort find it equally repulsive. It should be borne in mind, moreover, that the French people as a race seem to hold steadfastly to the belief that a piece of literature may be quite harmless or even severely moral for adults, yet wholly pernicious and immoral for young boys and girls. It has sometimes seemed to me that this

<sup>1</sup> He is, moreover, becoming interested in American literature. Everywhere I went I asked teachers, pupils, and other persons what American authors they knew. Longfellow, Poe, and Emerson were the favorites. Some mentioned Hawthorne and Whitman, and schoolboys frequently spoke of Cooper and Franklin. Many mature men mentioned William James with the deepest respect; and one aged student of philosophy went so far as to declare him the most important writer of the nineteenth century.

attitude served as a pretext for the production of an abundance of literary filth. But the fact remains that the young are protected from unwholesome reading in the schools. There is much in French literature that is clean, much that is intensely patriotic, much that is full of inspiration for youth; and it is upon readings of some of these kinds that the schoolboy is brought up.

The literary excellence of the young boy's reading extends to what he reads outside of school hours, although the degree to which he profits over the American boy in this respect is scarcely open to demonstration. He is busier in school than the American boy because of the greater number of school hours a week, and he has not, therefore, so much occasion to go outside the field of school reading for mental occupation. Furthermore, the fact that his parents in their youth read good literature and that he himself has read nothing else in school is almost certain to have influenced his taste to some degree; so that, all in all, he is less likely to be hungering after the cheap and the tawdry. Then, too, many of the plays that are presented in the theatres emphasize the importance of high literary standards. Through all the dramatic fashions of the past two or three decades, some of the French theatres have continued to give a number of classic plays every month. And at such a theatre as the Odéon<sup>1</sup> in Paris, which is subsidized by the government, one may, especially by subscribing to an agency, secure certain good seats at relatively low prices.

<sup>1</sup> Between 1906 and 1914, two hundred and thirty different plays were presented at the Odéon. Although some of these were only what might be called good drama, a large per cent of them were classics. More new plays are presented now than formerly, but the classics still hold large place. For a study of the plays presented at the Comédie-Française from 1840 to 1902, see pp. 3 ff. of *L'Enseignement du français*, by Lanson and others. 1909. Imprimerie Nationale.

Sometimes, too, the play that is given on the afternoon of Thursday — the school holiday in France — is preceded by a lecture on the play and the author. Teachers lament that the theatre is less influential in support of French literature than it was formerly; but a certain type of theatre must still be included with home reading as one of the "outside" forces contributing to literary taste.

It may be said, then, that the whole influence of what the boy reads in school and much that he reads outside, especially at home, is toward better expression on his own part. He is, of course, all this while subject to the influences of the street, the cheap newspaper, and the third-class theatre; but these influences are not permitted to remain operative to the exclusion of every other. His reading makes it obligatory that he live a part of the time in an atmosphere that counteracts the effect of the incorrect, the careless, or the vicious language of those whose lives, through bad fortune, touch his intimately.

## II. HOW THE PUPIL READS

French recitations in reading, whatever one may say about this or that individual device, are remarkable because of the alertness of mind they cultivate. Activity is their essential characteristic. The pupil, it is maintained, must profit chiefly by catching the full meaning of an assignment, by seeing below the surface, by reflecting upon the beauty or the strength that may not be evident at first to his immature, restless mind. He must, then, be kept active, body and soul, and impressions must be made while he is thus active and consequently receptive. In this theory there is, to be sure, nothing that is novel. But when it is faithfully carried into practice year after year, it cannot fail to leave a distinct impress upon a boy's life.

### A. IN THE LOWER GRADES

The reading lesson in the earlier grades falls readily into two parts; namely, gaining a thorough understanding of the text that is to be read, and coming to an appreciation of it by reading it aloud. It cannot be looked upon as we regard a reading lesson from a "reader", for the time is not devoted exclusively, or even in greater part, to the practice of reading orally. The oral reading is the culmination of the exercise, but it is dependent for its greatest efficacy upon the preliminary analysis and discussion of the text.

This preliminary discussion is based on the conviction that a boy should never be required to read orally anything he does not fully understand. The *Instructions* of the Minister insist that this conviction is well founded; and the daily exercises in the classroom make it clear that the Minister only expresses the general attitude. The discussion, it should be borne in mind, is not simply the bit of caution or suggestion that any self-respecting teacher anywhere would regard as necessary, but an exacting exercise in itself. Thus, for example, the reading lesson for Friday is first discussed in a general way by the teacher at the end of the recitation on Wednesday. He points out some of the difficulties without clearing them away, he asks about the meaning of words that he is certain are not familiar to the pupils, and he makes many suggestions about the best means of preparing the lesson. Then on Friday morning, perhaps after a short exercise in grammar, the earlier part of the hour is devoted to a more thorough-going discussion of the troublesome passages of the text. Even in the earlier grades the teacher carries on a campaign of questioning and explanation so exacting that the boys must exercise their observation and reasoning powers to the utmost in order to

pass through the exercise successfully. At first it seems like an unnecessarily rigid ordeal for the little fellows, and the American youth would undoubtedly resent it as an encroachment upon his liberty of following the line of least resistance; but as one sees the exercise from day to day and observes the discriminating mind that it develops, one cannot deny its powerful influence on a boy's oral reading and his ultimate ability to express himself intelligently.

In a given instance, the teacher must, of course, select judiciously the matters to be considered; but the discussion may include almost anything that is relevant. There is no ironclad routine. The meanings of individual words, the opposites of words, the spelling of an occasional word that might easily be misspelled or mispronounced, the length of the verses of poetry and the sentences of prose, the grammatical constructions that are likely to affect one's oral reading, the meaning of individual sentences, and above all, both at the beginning and end of the discussion, the general meaning of the selection read;—these are the matters one is sure to hear discussed. Frequently, too, before the oral reading, the teacher calls upon some boy to give the content of the lesson in his own words. This practice has, of course, the general value of training a boy in straightforward speech and of increasing his working vocabulary; but its immediate purpose is to assure the teacher that the pupil has understood accurately. Only after thorough study of this kind is the final reading taken up.

How does training of this kind affect the pupil's oral reading? It is difficult to make generalizations that are in all respects sound, yet one may say safely that the French boy reads well. In the first place, he reads correctly. He is exceedingly accurate and distinct in his pronunciation, he does not habitually leave out words, and he cannot be said

to "read in" many words that are not there. Again, he expresses himself in a good, clear voice. In the entire year I heard only a few cases of faltering or mumbling, and in these instances the teacher's severe criticism led me to believe the fault unusual. In general it seems to be thought that a boy had better make a clear-cut misreading and have it corrected, than to falter and hesitate, even though he should in the latter instance chance to get through the paragraph or poem without making any gross blunders. Then again, the reading impresses one as being natural. There is little of the so-called expressive reading that elocutionists cultivate for the purpose of proving their versatility. The one aim is to express an honest interpretation. The boy has adequate knowledge of what he reads, and in the consciousness of this knowledge he can combine abandon and fitness. Thus it comes about that the spirit as well as the form of the reading is good. Pupils read as if they were putting all their intelligence and all their best spirit into the task. Their characteristic French naïveté seems to prevent them from ever suspecting that anybody might laugh at their enthusiasm or their fidelity in expressing sentiment.

Good reading of this kind perpetuates itself. If boys hear their classmates reading well every day, and know themselves how to read well, they will enjoy the exercise; and French boys do enjoy it. They are eager to read and eager to listen. If a classmate does not read convincingly, they criticise him sharply; if he succeeds especially well, they reveal the utmost respect for his ability. This apparent hazard in the exercise seems to increase rather than diminish a pupil's willingness to try his skill.

To the interest which the pupils themselves create must be added that which is perpetuated by the teacher's own example. When, toward the end of a recitation, after the

pupils have read, the teacher reads the lesson himself, there is usually rapt attention. And when he volunteers to read a short story or a poem that is not in the day's assignment, there is frequently much noisy enthusiasm. The first reading of this kind that I heard will always remain vividly in my memory. It was in a primary school in Paris. The class had been discussing the Revolution, and the teacher, a gray-headed, gray-bearded man of fifty-four years, had explained the tremendous losses that the world had suffered because of the Terror. Then he told how, according to tradition, the poets André Chénier and Roucher had been led to the guillotine together. Turning to the little book-case behind his desk, he took from it a volume that contained Chénier's *La Jeune Captive*. After he had explained that Chénier had written this poem while he was imprisoned at St. Lazare, he read it simply and with feeling. The little boys of twelve, with their elbows on their desks and their chins resting in their palms, listened with increasing emotion until he came to the impressive lines,

O mort! tu peux attendre; éloigne, éloigne-toi!

and had gone on to the end of the poem; and it was only after he had put the book back in the case that the pupils took a deep breath and returned to their schoolday tasks from this glimpse of the tremendously dramatic life of their great-grandfathers. Such reading, I soon discovered, was not a rare kind of exception, nor was it the work of any special teacher of expression, but only a regular part of the duties of all grade teachers.<sup>1</sup>

If lessons in reading are well directed, they are, I believe, likely to be more important than most formal lessons in oral composition. The pupil has practice in pronunciation, he

<sup>1</sup> The normal schools have special teachers of reading.

is obliged to fix new words in mind, and he is led to exercise his sense of relation. But these are only the most commonplace benefits. Above these stands one that we seem too frequently to forget; namely, that the entire process of reading aloud deepens the feeling of the one who reads — that is, when he reads well — and completes the meaning of the author in a way that is impossible if one peruses silently. The reader's life is quickened by his own activity, and while he is in this impressionable state, he is brought into close contact with vigorous thought and a variety of emotions recorded in language good enough to remember. Reading that is in any such manner lifted above the conventional and the perfunctory must inevitably influence a pupil's entire mental experience.

#### B. IN THE UPPER GRADES: EXPLICATION OF TEXTS

##### 1. *The Method of Explication*

As we advance in the grades toward the time when the boy is fourteen or fifteen years of age, the emphasis in reading lessons is gradually shifted. Oral reading becomes less and less the center of study and becomes more and more a subordinate part of an exercise that the French call *explication des textes*. This method of studying literature seems to have had its origin in the explication of Latin and Greek texts. When, however, it came to be applied generally to the mother tongue, it underwent so many changes in meeting the demands of a living language, that it is now quite different from the method employed in the study of the Classics. It is, in truth, when one considers the whole procedure and its spirit, almost unique in character. To be sure, it must partake of other methods of literary study; but in its proportion, its balance, its completeness, its intent, it is distinct.

It is not merely the annotation of texts read carefully in

class; it is not like our so-called appreciative study in which the teacher endeavors to lead the pupil, without too minute analysis on his part, to catch the spirit of an author or to see the beauty of his work; it is not any species of meat-axe criticism in which the teacher leaves only a chopped-up carcass for the edification of the pupil; and it is not a dry study of words, or an overminute study of grammar or rhetoric. It is, rather than any of these, an exercise that aims to seize upon and unfold an author's purpose and his meaning so that the pupil will be in a condition of mind to react with intelligence on what the author has said. It includes the study of words, of grammatical and rhetorical principles, the making of close analysis, and the exercise of judgment; but these are all subordinate to the one purpose of catching the full force of the author's meaning. It is not exclusively historical, biographical, or critical; it combines the best parts of all three. It is an attempt to get rid of all the mental friction possible, so that what a writer has said will find its way into the pupil's deepest consciousness.

It would be impossible to detail step by step the procedure followed in a great number of different instances; and it would be quite as impossible to show all that the exercise is in spirit. I shall, however, point out some of the fundamentals of the method as I saw it in practice, try to suggest some of its spirit, and give at least one typical example.

The first requisite in the explication of a text is thorough word-by-word knowledge. This part of the study is based upon the simple theory — sometimes hopelessly forgotten by teachers of literature — that appreciation must come, first of all, from knowing what an author has said. Despite all that has been written about the French people's worship of form, they are chiefly interested in substance. In every schoolroom exercise based on a French classic, the

greater part of the teacher's energy is devoted to helping the pupil to answer the question, "What does it mean?" In fact, in most instances it is only as the form emerges significantly from the meaning, that it is considered at all. Thus it comes about that this first part of the explication is very important. There must be no wrongly or imperfectly understood words or idioms to prevent the pupil from comprehending. Then, when these purely verbal difficulties have been cleared away, the teacher calls upon some of the pupils to read or, perhaps, to summarize the lesson in a few words, so that he may feel justified in passing on from this part of the exercise.

Usually the next step is to observe the organization of the ideas. Guided by the teacher, the pupils endeavor to find at the outset the author's chief idea, his general theme. If the passage studied is not a complete poem or story or essay, but a fragment of a longer work, the teacher first of all relates it to the general theme of the large unit from which it has been taken, so that the pupils will not fix it in mind as something isolated. When this is once done, and the central idea has been firmly grasped, the teacher directs attention to the subordinate ideas and, logically, to the divisions of the text that mark the limits of these ideas. Then the next smaller divisions are taken up, and so on down to the smallest idea that is really of consequence. The pupil's notion of the text is, then, unified and balanced. He does not see it as so many words whose individual meanings he has learned, or as so many large divisions that lack clearness of detail, but as a well-conceived purpose that the author has carried out more or less perfectly from the largest divisions to the smallest. Structure is emphasized, because structure helps to reveal the author's meaning; yet words and idioms also must be considered, for in a master-

piece every word and every idiom has significance. The pupil must gather a meaning that is accurate and complete, and he must experience in some degree the author's original emotion.

The comment made in the course of the explication is, quite naturally, more inclusive than that in the earlier reading classes. Nothing that might help to render the passage lucid and luminous seems to be omitted. Both the subject-matter and the expression are regarded from a dozen different approaches. The pupil is required to compare and, especially, to contrast the ideas with others that are already familiar to him; he is asked to compare the images with others that he can recall from his reading or experience; he is put to the intellectual trouble of distinguishing between matter-of-fact and poetic conceptions; he is led to see that literary art is neither technical perfection nor absolute abandon, that structure must not project through, yet must not be hidden. Furthermore, the moral and social life of the time in question is made to stand out distinctly. Teachers do not offer long discussions of the matter, and they do not ask pupils to read what somebody has said second-hand, but they habitually assign letters and memoirs that have at the same time both literary value and power of illumination. The life that is reflected in complementary reading of this kind always interests students, it gives them something solid to stand upon, and it stimulates imagination and reflection. For boys of fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen, it is held to be infinitely better than overnice critical discussions of literary refinements which only a mature man or woman can see, and which, perchance, the writer himself never intended.

It is true that explication of texts might easily become mechanical or unwieldy in the hands of an unskillful teacher.

The danger is generally obviated through the pedagogical training of the teacher — if it is not obviated by his native ability — and by the insistence of the Minister and inspectors that teachers master the art of selection. Such a teacher as one is most likely to meet in the classroom seems to have learned what pieces of literature are easily adapted to pupils of a given age. In other words, he has learned what to assign. Moreover, he seems to have profited in his teaching experience by discovering what kinds of language difficulties are usually most troublesome, so that he can deal with these without discussing other problems that the pupils have solved themselves, or that do not require solution at the time. The lesson does not, then, degenerate into an incoherent study of language. Again, the typical teacher reveals much skill in making the biographical comment. If the life of an author has a special bearing on the piece assigned, he offers due explanation, just as he comments on historical or æsthetic or philosophical questions that arise; but he does not make the work of the class into a course in literary history. The chief purpose is to learn literature, not facts about literature.<sup>1</sup> If the life of the times dealt with is significant, the pupil learns of it through the reading of other assignments in literature — letters, very frequently — that deal with the period. The manual of literary history, if used at all below the university, is used sparingly, and almost solely for the purpose of enabling a pupil to orient himself when he begins to study the writing of a given author.

The pupil, too is expected to contribute toward a stimulating, profitable hour. He is constantly reminded by the

<sup>1</sup> "Tell me," said a French lady who had been a teacher, "something about the life of Longfellow. You Americans always know everything about the money an author made from his first poem, about his sisters-in-law, his wife's stepfather, his niece's fiancé, and the color of his favorite uncle's eyes."

attitude of the teacher that lessons are for the benefit of the pupil. He must be alert, he must reveal some intelligence, and he must exercise his mental powers without reserve. He learns early in his school career that perfunctory answers are only a waste of time. "It is admirable," said a boy of thirteen in response to the opening question about a short poem. "Of course it is admirable," exclaimed the teacher with some wrath. "If it were not admirable, we should not be studying it." Then he turned to another boy and asked him to say something that was not taken for granted by everybody. The attitude of which this instance is typical is maintained, too, toward answers that the pupils have read from an editor's commentary. "Perhaps that is true," I heard many a teacher say, "but that is not your answer; you read that in a footnote. Now tell us what you think about the matter yourself." He is not required to classify all his reading according to "schools" or literary theories; but he is asked to engage in the process of reflection. The reading is expected to produce a reaction definite enough to be expressed clearly in acceptable French.

The final step in the explication is, ordinarily, the reading of the entire assignment aloud. The reading at the beginning of a lesson is only preliminary; it is meant to contribute to the explanation. But this reading at the end is supposed to embody all the knowledge that has resulted from the explication. The author's thought, his feeling, and his imagery must now be clearly reflected. Almost invariably, too, the teachers insist upon reading that is good technically, just as in the lower grades. The boy who stumbles over the words, or reads monotonously as if he did not feel the author's full meaning, or gets an unpleasant sing-song into the reading of verse, is sure to feel the wrath of his teacher and not infrequently the disdain of his classmates.

It seems not to be thought unworthy of a young gentleman — who is probably growing a downy moustache — to read pathos, simple narrative, humor, tragedy, or exalted poetry, as if he felt what he read.

### 2. *An Example of Explication*

Let us consider an example of explication. Many difficulties, I am aware, must attend any attempt to reduce classroom discussion to the printed page. To begin with, not all aspects of a given method will reveal themselves in one recitation.<sup>1</sup> There is the danger, too, of an impression of false proportion: something may be omitted or passed over hastily that some reader feels is very important; or perhaps even if it is not important, some reader wishes for personal reasons to have it discussed fully. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to put much of the spirit of a recitation into print. The teacher's outline and the full notes I secured will enable me, however, to indicate the facts of the lesson, and the exercise thus reconstructed may suggest a little of the spirit in which teacher and pupil carry on the work. This recitation was in Lycée Hoche, Versailles, and it was conducted by Monsieur J. Bezard, who is recognized as a skillful teacher. Most of the boys in the class were sixteen years of age.

The text for study was Lamartine's short poem, *l'Isolément*. It had been assigned some days in advance, so that the pupils might have ample time to read and reread it and to reflect upon it. The very definite purpose of the recitation, which covered two full hours (with a short intermission in the middle of the session), was *to discover in the poem the essential characteristics of the romantic state of*

<sup>1</sup> The following lesson is, for example, chiefly an explication of literary history. If the same teacher had been treating Corneille or La Bruyère, he would have given larger place to grammar and the history of words.

*mind.* In keeping with the accepted practice in France, the teacher had cleared the way for a good recitation by making definite suggestions to the pupils and by preparing himself with extreme thoroughness. Throughout the two periods the pupils wrote down from time to time such notes as seemed important. This practice, the teacher pointed out, was valuable not only in the individual recitation, but in summarizing the year's work. At the end of the year, the pupil possesses an extremely serviceable commentary on all the reading he has done. Monsieur Bezard has, too, a very stimulating way of writing with the pupils. He does not write, nor do the pupils, in the midst of the discussion of a given question, but as soon as a matter is threshed out, as soon as a conclusion is reached, teacher and pupil write together; but each, of course, in his own way. After they have written, the next question is taken up. As to the spirit of this recitation, it may be said, I believe, that the teacher's chief concern was threefold: (1) to set the pupils to thinking and talking; (2) to have them express themselves with absolute sincerity and without reserve; and (3) to keep them in a pleasant state of mind.

#### I. THE SUBJECT-MATTER

In the recitation itself, the teacher begins by speaking briefly about the *Méditations*, the volume in which *l'Isolement* was originally published. He explains that perhaps the *Cid* in 1636 and *Andromaque* in 1667 were the only other writings in French that had been received with such favor as had the *Méditations*. Lamartine, he points out, was unknown in 1819, yet celebrated in all Europe in 1820. It seemed that the *Méditations*, like other books that meet the need of a certain time, had been waited for by the people. It met an immediate response. *L'Isolement*, the first poem

in the volume, is itself sufficient to define the public taste of that date; it represents the romantic state of mind.

#### A. ANALYSIS

The teacher then asks a few clear-cut questions about the preparation that the pupils have made, remarks that he hopes every boy has studied the poem with great care and has made a written plan of it, and then calls upon a boy to read. The boy begins to read, but the teacher interrupts him. "Don't miss anything. Read all. You have forgotten the title." Then the boy reads:

#### L'ISOLEMENT<sup>1</sup>

(1)

Souvent sur la montagne, à l'ombre du vieux chêne  
 Au coucher du soleil, tristement je m'assieds;  
 Je promène au hasard mes regards sur la plaine,  
 Dont le tableau changeant se déroule à mes pieds.

(2)

Ici gronde le fleuve aux vagues écumantes;  
 Il serpente, et s'enfonce en un lointain obscur;  
 Là le lac immobile étend ses eaux dormantes  
 Où l'étoile du soir se lève dans l'azur.

<sup>1</sup> This illustrative lesson requires the use of the original language of the poem. For the convenience of readers who do not know French, I append a translation, made by Professor Francis Daniels, of Wabash College.

#### ISOLATION

(1)

Oft on the mountain, in the old oak's shade,  
 Sadly at close of day I take my seat;  
 Upon the plain my random look is laid,  
 Where spreads a changing picture at my feet.

(2)

Here bickers with its foaming waves the stream;  
 It winds, and in dim haze is lost afar;  
 Yonder the drowsy lake lies all adream,  
 Where rises in the blue the evening star.

(3)

Au sommet de ces monts couronnés de bois sombres,  
 Le crépuscule encor jette un dernier rayon;  
 Et le char vaporeux de la reine des ombres  
 Monte, et blanchit déjà les bords de l'horizon.

(4)

Cependant, s'élançant de la flèche gothique,  
 Un son religieux se répand dans les airs:  
 Le voyageur s'arrête, et la cloche rustique  
 Aux derniers bruits du jour mêle de saints concerts.

When he finishes the fourth stanza he says, "There is the first part of the poem. The poet has described the country at twilight."

"Yes, in a way," replies the teacher; "but you have forgotten the important part. You say these stanzas are a description of the country at twilight. What are the characteristics of this period of the day?"

One pupil: "Obscurity."

Another: "Mystery."

The pupil who has read: "Tranquillity."

"That is it," replies the teacher. "At twilight when everything sinks into half obscurity, one gains the impression of great repose, great calm in nature. Let us write then for the first part . . ."

(3)

The gathering dusk still casts a farewell light  
 On these dark mountain summits, forest-crowned;  
 The vaporous chariot of the queen of night  
 Rises, and whitens the horizon's bound.

(4)

Now meanwhile, pealing from the Gothic spire,  
 A holy sound upon the air outfloats;  
 The traveller stops; as day's last hums expire  
 Pealeth the rustic bell its hallowed notes.

The teacher and pupils write together as the teacher dictates:

*General Theme*

1. *There is a singular charm in a quiet landscape.*

"Now will you continue the reading?"

The pupil reads on:

(5)

Mais à ces doux tableaux mon âme indifférente  
N'éprouve devant eux ni charme ni transports;  
Je contemple la terre ainsi qu'une ombre errante:  
Le soleil des vivants n'échauffe plus les morts.

(6)

De colline en colline en vain portant ma vue,  
Du sud à l'aquilon, de l'aurore au couchant,  
Je parcours tous les points de l'immense étendue,  
Et je dis: "Nulle part le bonheur ne m'attend."

(7)

Que me font ces vallons, ces palais, ces chaumières,  
Vains objets dont pour moi le charme est envolé ?  
Fleuves, rochers, forêts, solitudes si chères,  
Un seul être vous manque, et tout est dépeuplé!

(5)

But by these pictures sweet my soul unswayed  
    Feels neither charm nor rapture on it shed;  
The earth I gaze on like a wandering shade:  
    The sun of those who live warms not the dead.

(6)

From hill to hill in vain I turn my face,  
    From south to north, from east unto the west,  
I traverse all the points of boundless space:  
    Nowhere for me, O Joy, thou tarriest!

(7)

These vales, these palaces, these huts appear  
    Vain objects all, whose charm for me has fled!  
Streams, rocks, and forests, solitudes so dear,  
    Ye lack one soul, — all is untenanted!

(8)

Que le tour du soleil ou commence ou s'achève,  
 D'un œil indifférent je le suis dans son cours;  
 En un ciel sombre ou pur qu'il se couche ou se lève,  
 Qu'importe le soleil ? je n'attends rien des jours.

(9)

Quand je pourrais le suivre en sa vaste carrière,  
 Mes yeux verraien partout le vide et les déserts:  
 Je ne désire rien de tout ce qu'il éclaire;  
 Je ne demande rien à l'immense univers.

" This is the second part; and I should call it ' The poet's indifference to nature.' "

" Oh, no, no!" exclaims the teacher. " That would never do."

After a spirited discussion in which all the pupils participate, it is agreed that this part should be called " The indifference and coldness of nature as regarded by the poet in his grief."

" What grief ? " asks the teacher.

Several pupils: " The death of Elvire."

Teacher: " Who was Elvire ? "

A pupil: " Madame Charles, whom he had known at Aix-les-Bains in 1815 and who died a consumptive in 1818."

Teacher:

" ' Un seul être vous manque, et tout est dépeuplé.'

(8)

His course I follow with indifferent eyes,  
 Whether the sun begin or end his way;  
 Whether in fair or foul he set or rise,  
 What matters it ? I hope naught from the day.

(9)

Though him I followed in his vast career,  
 Mine eyes would see but empty wastes unfurled;  
 Naught do I wish of all he lighteth here;  
 Naught ask I of the illimitable world.

" He is still broken-hearted in his sorrow, and searches nature in vain for an echo of his feeling. Such is the second part.

" Let us now pass to the third. What do you call this last division, the remaining stanzas? Read them."

The pupil reads:

(10)

Mais peut-être au delà des bornes de sa sphère,  
Lieux où le vrai soleil éclaire d'autres cieux,  
Si je pouvais laisser ma dépouille à la terre,  
Ce que j'ai tant rêvé paraîtrait à mes yeux!

(11)

Là, je m'enivrerais à la source où j'aspire;  
Là, je retrouverais et l'espoir et l'amour,  
Et ce bien idéal que toute âme désire,  
Et qui n'a pas de nom au terrestre séjour!

(12)

Que ne puis-je, porté sur le char de l'Aurore,  
Vague objet de mes vœux, m'élançer jusqu'à toi!  
Sur la terre d'exil pourquoi resté-je encore?  
Il n'est rien de commun entre la terre et moi.

(10)

Mayhap beyond the limits of his round,  
Realms where the true Sun brightens other skies,  
Were I to leave my body in the ground,  
What I have dreamed so long would greet mine eyes!

(11)

There I should quaff the fount, where I aspire;  
There love and hope once more would be mine own,  
And that ideal good all souls desire  
And which is nameless in this earthly wone!

(12)

Why can I not, borne on Aurora's car,  
Vague object of my dreams, soar up to thee?  
Why still in exile stay I here afar?  
No common bond unites the earth and me.

(13)

Quand la feuille des bois tombe dans la prairie,  
 Le vent du soir s'élève et l'arrache aux vallons;  
 Et moi, je suis semblable à la feuille flétrie:  
 Emportez-moi comme elle, orageux aquilons!

"The third part: I should call that the vision of the beyond; or perhaps it is happiness."

"The vision of the beyond? What do you mean by 'the beyond'?" inquires the teacher.

"By that I mean that the poet believes there is a place where happiness, absolute good fortune, smiles upon men."

"Very well," answers the teacher. "Let us write."

The teacher dictates and all write (See top of page 133):

2. *Nevertheless this quiet country is not sufficient for the heart of an afflicted man.*

(a) *Nature seems indifferent and cold.*

(b) *It is somewhere in the future that the poet hopes to find reality (real happiness).*

### B. THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE POEM

After this analysis, which is carried on rapidly, consuming not more than ten or fifteen minutes, the class takes up the study of the subject-matter in a more exhaustive fashion. The pupils discuss suitable subjects for lyrics, such as love and death; they observe how Lamartine disregarded the older standards and the older ideals, how he pushed aside the conventions of classic art and its hatred for the expression of personality, for the *ego*, and through his attitude gave his poetry a spirit of freshness and novelty.

"What," asks the teacher, "is the saying which sums up, on this point, the classical attitude?"

(13)

When on the plain the forest leaf doth fall,  
 The wind of even wafts it to the vales.  
 Like to a withered leaf am I withal;  
 Sweep me along like it, ye stormy gales!

Many pupils: "The saying of Pascal,—'The I is odious!'"<sup>1</sup>

"And what is the other symbolic saying, the first romantic utterance . . . ?"

The same pupils: "The words of Rousseau<sup>2</sup> at the beginning of his *Confessions*: 'I wish to reveal to my fellow beings a man in all the truth of nature, and this man, it will be myself! . . . Myself alone!'"

The teacher: "Well said! There we have the doctrine of all the romanticists, the first which interprets for us their 'state of mind.' Lamartine revealed to the reader that which would have seemed odious, or at least negligible, a hundred years earlier,—his emotions, his personal feelings. '*Je m'assieds . . . , je promène . . . , mon âme . . . , ma vue . . . , je n'attends . . . , je ne desire . . . , mes yeux,*'—always the expression of self! As to his sentiments, it seems at first sight that they are nothing new. To speak the truth, they seem to be commonplace."

At this word "commonplace" a few pupils give signs of surprise.

"You see," remarks Monsieur Bezard, turning to me, "they have their own opinions of the poetry they read; and the art of discussing it is not wholly unknown to them.—But why do you protest, M——?"

The pupil: "The word is very severe for such a poet as Lamartine."

The teacher: "Possibly it seems so because you do not understand the word in the sense in which I have used it.<sup>3</sup> I understand here by the word a sentiment all of us meet with

<sup>1</sup> "Le moi est hâssable."

<sup>2</sup> The class had studied Rousseau only a short time before.

<sup>3</sup> The French word was the noun *banalité*, which might be taken in a more unfavorable sense.

often. Haven't you ever experienced the tranquillity of the evening?"

"Yes, yes!"

"And haven't you found nature quite indifferent to your grief?"

"Yes, yes; that is true."

"And haven't you, whatever your religious faith, shared the hope of the poet?"

Two or three pupils: "Yes, yes."

Another: "But we could not say it in verse."

Teacher: "That is just what I was about to remark. The subject of a lyric poem is always an idea that is common to the world. . . ."

A pupil: "Love."

Another: "Death."

A third: "Nature."

Teacher: ". . . apropos of which the poet opens to us his own heart, reveals what he calls the 'sighing of his soul'; what Victor Hugo would call his own *Chants du crépuscule* or his *Contemplations*; what the . . ."

Many pupils: "An elegy."

Teacher: "Just the word Lamartine himself used in the commentary that follows each of his *Méditations*! . . . It becomes quite clear, then, that that which interests us is not the subject-matter itself, but the sighing, the quality of the sighing! I doubt, for example, whether the sighings of D—— or of N—— [two sturdy boys in the class] would be capable of interesting the public, whereas those of Lamartine! . . ."

(Laughter by the entire class, including D—— and N——.)

The teacher continues: "The question, then, really is to see how the sighings of the great poet render interesting his

state of mind, his 'romantic state of mind', that which he puts into them of himself, 'of the man himself', as Buffon says."

A pupil: "The style."

Another: "The expression."

Teacher: "Yes, all the qualities that make a poem of Lamartine differ from the reflections of D—— or N——, or even from some insignificant and cold poem belonging to some mediocre poet of the eighteenth century, a J.-B. Rousseau, a Delille, a Lebrun-Pindare.<sup>1</sup> Let us return, then, to our text."

## II. LAMARTINE'S EXPRESSION (DICTION)

- A. HOW SOMETIMES IT FALLS SHORT OF ORIGINALITY
- B. THE TRACES OF PSEUDO-CLASSIC TASTE

"We cannot say," continues the teacher, "that everything in this elegy is absolutely original and serves to reveal the romantic state of mind. The severer critics can find in it a good many imperfections. . . ."

(Further expressions of surprise.)

Teacher: "How's this? You do not find any worn-out turns of expression, any artificial images that are worthy of Abbé Delille, or at least of Esménard? Search, then."

The pupils glance through the text and mention some worn metaphors such as *le char vaporeux de la reine des ombres* or *le char de l'Aurore*; such faults as *le fleuve aux vagues écumantes*; such inconsistencies as *saints concerts* (the word *concert* applying properly to the harmonious sounds of several wind or string instruments, and not to the

<sup>1</sup> The manner in which Monsieur Bezard makes a year-course of explication into a coherent study of the past three centuries of French literature may be seen advantageously in his book entitled *De la méthode littéraire*. Librairie Vuibert.

single sound of a country church-bell); some additional faults such as *la flèche gothique*.

Here we may see how the French teacher cultivates in his pupils the habit of precision, and to what measure he succeeds. Their alertness is well illustrated in the discussion of this last phrase, *la flèche gothique*. As soon as it is cited, one boy declares that he knows this is a fault, for he has been at Milly, where Lamartine said he wrote the poem, and the little church in the village does not have a Gothic steeple but a low Roman tower. And before one of his classmates can finish suggesting that perhaps he did not observe well, he holds up a postcard which he has brought along to show to the teacher. "Lamartine," explains Monsieur Bezard, "had not in 1820 the same scruples that we have in 1913. At that time, the public so little distinguished the various periods of the Middle Ages that nothing suggested to the poet that Roman might not still be Gothic." He adds, moreover, that we feel the influence of classic habits on the rhythm of the new poetry. In this respect at least, we do not find anything very new or very original. Lamartine, especially in 1818, did not feel the need of departing from classical standards. Whereas Victor Hugo boasted of having broken up the Alexandrine, and whereas he created a new verse, richer, more varied, and more sonorous, Lamartine was content, at least it so appears, with the rhymes and divisions familiar to the disciples of Boileau.

"But," some one interrupts, "do you think this is true?"  
Many pupils: "No, no."

Teacher: "It is true that the effect produced is not the same, in spite of the relative poorness of the rhyme, in spite of the conservative structural character of the lines. Let us see."

**III. THE ORIGINALITY OF THE RHYTHM AND  
THE IMAGES****A. THE RHYTHM**

" And nevertheless, from this classic verse, in appearance so little modified, he draws effects that were unknown before he wrote."

*i. The fullness, the amplitude of the verse*

The teacher immediately resorts to example. First he asks a boy to read, and then he (the teacher) takes up an enumeration (" De colline en colline . . . , " four lines), an interrogation (" Que me font ces vallons . . . , " two lines), another enumeration (" Fleuves, rochers . . . , " two lines), and another interrogation (" Que ne puis-je . . . , " two lines); then the entire stanza (" Mais peut-être au delà . . . ").

" Thus the poet carries us without effort and leads us with him in an uninterrupted movement: he rises like the eagle which seems not to move its wings, which seems to rise without effort into the sky. In that manner he makes more profound the impression of calm in the contemplation (the first part of the poem), of resignation in the melancholy reverie (second part), and of serenity in the expression of hope (third part). This is really the most original characteristic of Lamartine's poetry. Try to reread one of these enumerations and one of these interrogations, even if you are only a novice at reading aloud, and you will see how you are ' sustained ' by the poet, how you find time to breathe leisurely, how you arrive without panting at the end of a long period."

A boy reads:

" ' Mais à ces doux tableaux . . .  
' Que me font ces vallons . . . ' "

Teacher: "There in those two stanzas you have already found some of Lamartine's prodigious facility."

*2. The variety of the rhythm*

"This amplitude is altogether different from mere length. If these periods carry one on in this manner without appearing to be long or monotonous, it is because Lamartine, without letting it be seen, has introduced a thousand elements of variety.

"First, note the pauses, which are discreetly dissimilar, but which the reader finds by instinct, and which are the first secret of poetic harmony, even in the grand poetry of the steadier kind of gait. It is by the distribution of the pauses that a verse of poetry differs from a line of prose of twelve syllables, such as you can find by the hundred in the poets of the eighteenth century! Try to find the pauses in each part of the poem."

And the class discovers that in many instances after a series of lines which march steadily, other passages have the pauses multiplied, prolonged, permitting long rests, so that the reader is sure to prolong the thought or to foresee the direction that the reverie will take.

Examples:

Souvent ♂ sur le montagne ♂ à l'ombre du vieux chêne ♂  
 Monte ♂ et blanchit déjà . . .  
 Que me font ces vallons, ♂ ces palais, ♂ ces chaumières ♂  
 Fleuves, ♂ rochers, ♂ forêts, ♂ solitudes si chères ♂  
 Mais peut-être ♂

"Here the silence is so eloquent that if one has pronounced 'peut-être' in a tone of surprise and hope, he leaves to the hearer time to feel the transition, and pass from despair to consolation."

Then the teacher points out other pauses:

Là  $\cap$  je m'enirrerais . . .

Que ne puis-je,  $\cap$  porté sur le char de l'Aurore.

When he finishes, he continues his observations: "Each gives to the stanza it introduces the time necessary for the mind to take wing, to the eye the time to measure the distance to be covered. Thus the poet without having willed or searched has found by instinct the secret of the variety in his lines; and by so doing he has added to strength an incomparable grace."

"It is the same with the sounds, that is to say, with that management of the strong and mute syllables which makes verse good verse or, on the other hand, heavier and less harmonious than the poorest prose. Notice first the rhyme, which, without being overnice, has always the sonorousness that is suited to a poem written in a minor key. The effects are nearly always the result of feminine rhymes, those which prolong the sound and the thought, those which leave time for contemplating the landscape, for being lost in the despair, for being instructed in religious consolations. Even many of the masculine rhymes contribute in their turn. For instance, *obscur* and *azur*, *airs* and *concerts*, *transports* and *morts*, *cours* and *jours*, *déserts* and *univers*, *amour* and *séjour*, leave the lines less finished than such rhymes as *envolé* and *dépeuplé*, or *couchant* and *attend*; and it is not by mere chance that everything in the rhymes leads us to breathe out the voice little by little, to trail off the sounds to an almost inaudible close. As to the charm that comes from the succession of syllables more or less accented, it arises quite evidently from the ease with which the *liaisons* or the mutes permit the linking of the words and the sentences without shock, without the least appearance of hiatus. . . .

It is the *lactea ubertas* of Vergil, which no one of our poets save Racine calls to mind better than Lamartine. Compare his poetry with the most celebrated pieces of Victor Hugo or Musset; you will find more strength in the one, more amiable grace in the other; but Lamartine is unique for the tranquil sweep of his tides of harmony; never has the ‘plaintive elegy’ been expressed with more gentleness and calm nobility.”

### B. THE IMAGES

“ And what, finally, is the character of the Lamartinian image? Without doubt it lacks the precision, the brilliancy, the grandeur that we see quite often in the other romanticists. It is reserved, well suited to half-tints, somewhat like the hazy indefiniteness of twilight. But nevertheless, it is well adapted to the elegy; it helps the poet to put everything in the minor key, to find the expression best suited to each of the parts of his threnody.”

#### *1. The half-tints in the painting of the landscape (First part)*

“ You recall that Legouvé referred to certain words in a text as ‘words of significance.’ These are the ones on which the reader leans, the ones that maintain the tone of the entire passage. In the first four stanzas here, what are the ‘words of significance’? Read, B——.”

The pupils note the words: *Tristement, la plaine, se déroule, lointain, dormantes, sombres, blanchit, religieux.*

“ There are the words that stand out, the ones that could be recalled from a rapid reading. True, the first and last do not suggest images. The others give only some gray tints; nothing luminous; nothing gaudy. As to the more lively images, we have seen that they are a little out of tune,

that they are not even true: the river is about thirty miles from Milly, and the postcard that G—— has brought with him shows that it was necessary to imagine the Gothic steeple. The landscapes of Lamartine are nearly always thus. When he has wished to portray them in an exact manner, he has not always been entirely successful (See *Jocelyn*). It has been observed, on the contrary, that he excelled in the portrayal of the night; that is to say, landscapes where one can see few things, but where one's feeling enables one to divine more than one can see. Here we see in the exterior world just what is in harmony with the troubled spirit of the poet, whose gaze is always half introspective, and who casts on the objects of the landscape a part of his own melancholy. When you compare Lamartine's *Le Lac* with the passage in J.-J. Rousseau that inspired it, you will see the nature of this transformation of a distinct landscape into a hazy sketch, that which permits reverie to be carried away on the wings of observation."

2. *The half-tints in the expression of grief (Second part)*

"It is often remarked that the Greeks shrank away from a too realistic portrayal of physical or moral anguish. For instance, when the artist wished to avoid showing the face of Agamemnon at the death of his daughter, he represented the unhappy father concealing his face in his mantle. Lamartine has something of this Hellenic reserve; he is not carried away in any transports of enthusiasm, and he does not yield himself up to any violent despair; he contemplates, protests by his 'indifference'; he is without ambition and without 'vows' in the presence of the unpitying universe; he remains calm, if not cold.

"It does not follow that he ceased to be a poet or to think in images; but the images in the second part of the poem,

as in the first, are a little gray, voluntarily browned a trifle, in keeping with the tendency towards reverie. . . . A good method of testing the poetic value of images is that which was employed formerly by certain teachers of the humanities in helping the pupils to feel the beauty of expression in Vergil.<sup>1</sup> It consists of summing up the poetry in a brief, dry, prosaic formula, and then comparing this abstract idea with the picture by which the poet has interpreted it."

The teacher then designates five pupils and asks each one to sum up a stanza of the second part of the poem. They sum them up as follows:

First stanza: I am indifferent.

Second stanza: I do not find happiness anywhere.

Third stanza: Nothing speaks to my heart.

Fourth stanza: I expect nothing from time . . .

Fifth stanza: . . . nor from the things about me.

Then the teacher compares each summary with each stanza, from the metaphors in the first ("ombre errante" . . . "le soleil des vivants") and the evocation of the third ("vallons," etc. . . . "fleuves," etc.) to the view the poet takes of the great universe in the fifth. "Yes, truly," he concludes, "this poet is pretty nearly always one who thinks only in images; but the images are bathed in a light haze; they correspond to his melancholy."

### *3. The half-tints in the expression of hope (Third part)*

"In his expression of religious sentiment, Lamartine has been much reproached by the orthodox because, they say, he lacks sufficient precision."

A pupil: "They speak about religiosity rather than real religious feeling."

<sup>1</sup> This practice is referred to in a book on the teaching of Latin that Monsieur Bezard has since published. See J. Bezard, *Comment apprendre le latin à nos fils*, p. 303.

Another: "Lamartine's mother one time wrote: 'My son stands in real need of positive faith.' "

"But that which certain believers consider as a cause of religious deficiency becomes a literary beauty; by hopes a trifle vague he brings to an admirable close this elegy in half-tint. These last stanzas, far from being a bright light, are a series of reflections; and they harmonize well with the reflections of twilight! They are a reflection of Plato, first, with the "limits of the sphere" that man can not overleap, with the true sun brightening other heavens, which we may see only as shadows in a great cavern! Then they are a reflection of intoxicating Christian mysticism, in which Lamartine found, with Petrarch, the joys of ideal love."

A pupil: "Lamartine says in his commentary that he had taken a volume of Petrarch with him to the mountain the day he wrote the poem."

The teacher, continuing: — "A reflection of Petrarch, his master, after whom he idealized love and confused it with prayer. They are a reflection of nature herself in the season when she languishes before the approach of winter and with which we have a comparison in the last stanza. And after we have read once again this admirable comparison, we shall have a more definite idea of the simplicity of Lamartine's themes, the harmony of his language and the color of his style, the depth and nobility of his feeling. It is justly called the first of modern elegiacs; of it one may say, so much does it lift one toward the mountain tops,

'Qu'il n'est rien de commun entre la terre et lui!'

"Listen:

'Quand la feuille des bois tombe dans la prairie,  
Le vent du soir s'élève et l'arrache aux vallons;  
Et moi, je suis semblable à la feuille flétrie:  
Emportez-moi comme elle, orageux aquilons! ''

*3. The Value of Explication*

When we add the personal presence of a good teacher to this thorough-going method of studying a text, we can begin to see why the sons of shopkeepers, physicians, military engineers, and artillerymen will spend two hours in the study of a short poem and enjoy every minute of the time. We can begin to understand, too, why French teachers everywhere attach so much importance to explication of texts.

It seems scarcely necessary to enumerate the ways in which such study is valuable. There can be no doubt that it trains the mind in logical thinking, since first of all the pupil must search out the consecutive order of the ideas. Then it sharpens the feeling for structure and for the effective use of individual words. Again, the deliberation with which the pupil passes over the lesson fixes his attention closely on the subject-matter. Then, too, it gives him such a clear insight into a number of pieces of literature that he is much less likely to be content with superficial knowledge in his outside reading. Still again, it develops intelligent self-reliance. When a pupil has devoted several years to study of this kind, he is almost certain to form habits of doing work so thoroughly that he will not be perpetually trying merely to meet "minimum requirements" and assignments. And finally, it gives the pupil a correct notion of the relative importance of the general theme, the structure, and the language of a good piece of literature. Appreciation, he comes to see, is neither something mechanical nor something vague and hopelessly elusive, but something toward which both knowledge and feeling contribute.

**III. MEMORY EXERCISES IN READING AND LITERATURE**

Not to speak in some detail about the place that memory exercises hold in reading lessons and in the later study of literature would be to distort facts. At one time, memory work occupied a very prominent position in the French school life. Teachers, however, were not always thoughtful in making assignments, and they forgot that memorizing may be worse than useless when carried on in a perfunctory manner. As a result, memorization lost the position it had formerly occupied. But educators soon began to observe that the adequate development of the memory was in danger of being neglected; so the memorization was modified and resumed. The practice, it may be seen by referring to the programmes in Chapter II, is to-day obligatory and receives much official encouragement. As a result, one finds the pupils, both large and small, carrying on the work to a notable degree. They learn not a few but a great many poems, and perhaps as many good pieces of prose.

There is nothing unusual in the order of procedure. After the pupil has thoroughly mastered the general sequence of ideas, he learns some logical division of the selection each day so that by the time he has finished the reading assignment he is in possession of one or more of the best passages in it. Or, if he is studying a group of short poems, he has learned two or three of them by the time he has finished the study of the group. When a pupil is called upon, he is ordinarily required to recite the entire passage or poem, so that he will not have a broken, disjointed impression of the author's meaning. In these memory exercises we see again the tendency of the French to fill their recitations with well-directed activity. If a boy mumbles or drones — something, indeed, unlikely — the teacher finds a way of stimulating him to a more distinct manner of expression; if

a boy fails, some of his keen-eyed, wide-awake classmates are always ready to take his place and try to do better.

One finds a number of safeguards against the danger of mere parrot-talk. To begin with, teachers give much thought to selecting the memory passages. They have constantly before them the warning of the Minister against the evils of careless choosing:

"It is impossible to exercise too great care in the selection of pieces to be committed to memory: for a long time they will be almost the only intellectual nourishment of the child. It can be seen, then, how important it is not to fix in his retentive memory anything insignificant in meaning or mediocre in form. Assuredly it is not easy to find pieces that are at the same time both simple and interesting; but gradually the teacher, in the course of his reading, will bring together a collection for his own use, although this will not prevent him from making thoughtful use of collections prepared by others. The essential point is that the piece should always be *chosen* by him, and chosen because it meets certain needs, fulfills certain requirements, of which the chief one is that it should be understood and enjoyed by the pupils. If the piece is short, expressive, and clear, it will be quickly learned and easily remembered."<sup>1</sup>

A further safeguard is to be found in the full explanation that every teacher is obliged to make before he assigns a selection. As was pointed out in Chapter III, no teacher may ask a pupil to write down anything that he does not understand; and the prohibition holds in memorizing. The boy must know what he commits, so that his memory will retain not merely words, but ideas. Again, the exercise is kept alive and made rational by the numerous questions that the teacher asks concerning substance or form.

<sup>1</sup> *Instructions*, p. 66.

Sometimes he stops a pupil and asks him to explain a word that he has just uttered; or if he suspects that the pupil is not visualizing clearly, he plies him with questions about what he sees in certain passages. In all these ways, as well as in many others, the pupil is kept from mere pronouncing, and is made to feel that reciting from memory is, in truth, knowing and expressing an author's meaning.

It is remarkable how easily the French boy of ten or twelve commits to memory; and it is even more remarkable how well he retains what he commits. The permanence of the pupil's acquisitions was revealed in a number of tests that I made. For instance, when I went to a *lycée* one morning to visit classes, I asked a teacher if he would give me the privilege of hearing memory passages for a time. He very generously offered me the entire period. Different members of the class were called upon to recite anything they had learned that year or in preceding years. No pupil recited anything that a classmate had already given, and yet at the end of the hour a great many were anxiously waiting with poems, parts of orations, and passages from prose narrative or from plays that they were ready to recite. Occasionally a boy remembered imperfectly, but some one was always ready to step into his place and continue the recitation without faltering.

It requires very little reflection or imagination to see how boys and girls profit permanently by memory exercises of this kind. They catch some of the vision of great minds; they develop a just sense of organization and form; and they acquire a feeling for the use of individual words. They are, then, supplied with a stock of ideas, and their minds are filled with the echoes of language in which ideas may be expressed felicitously. The result may not be immediate, and it certainly does not come with any machinelike

152 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE  
regularity or precision; but it is sure to be evident sooner or later.

#### IV. THE RELATION OF LITERATURE TO THEME-WRITING

In our own country, the problem of establishing a satisfactory relation between reading and writing seems to be perennial. We never cease asking, "How is reading to be utilized in theme assignments?" and "What should be the relation between reading and the pupil's own style?" If, now, we but reflect for a moment on the character of the material the French boy reads and the manner in which he does his reading, and then recall the kind of compositions which the older French boys are obliged to write, we ought to gain some light on our own case.

Let us consider the first question: How is reading to be utilized in theme assignments? In so far as the French teacher has answered the question for himself, he believes that the reading should be the starting-point for thinking the pupil's own thinking, in which he can employ the observations and facts of his own life — and not the basis of conventional literary criticisms in which the pupil is forced by his immaturity to write in the threadbare platitudes of the hour. Turn back to Chapter III and run through the theme subjects drawn from literature. Or glance over the list of subjects set for the baccalaureate examination. How are these subjects phrased? In what direction do they send the pupil as soon as he fixes attention upon them? Observe how they begin: "Reflect upon this thought expressed by a contemporary author, making use of your observation and experience." "Jean-Jacques Rousseau declared that books were the instruments of childhood's greatest misery. . . . In a letter to some friend, say what you think of this opinion," etc. "Victor

Hugo said . . . In the poems that you have read, recall the influences of this love for home life." "Analyze this extract [from Montaigne] and set forth (1) Montaigne's theories of education; (2) the characteristics of his style; (3) some general characteristics of the Renaissance." Thus the assignments run. They do not call for critical generalizations which it is impossible for any boy of sixteen or seventeen to make; they call for thinking, for concentration, and for the marshaling of all the pupil's experience.

Now, pupils cannot employ material in this manner unless they have read with great thoroughness. If they have read without forming the habit of looking on all sides of what the author says, they will find it next to impossible to write upon a given assignment that calls for thinking. If a pupil falters, mispronounces, reads words that are not on the page, leaves out many that are essential to the meaning, and expresses himself vaguely when he is asked to give the content of a text, he will, to be sure, find it easier to fill a few pages with second-hand criticism than to reflect upon a specific thought or a group of thoughts. But he will do nothing more. A boy's true critical powers develop slowly even under the most encouraging conditions. It is only the occasional pupil that normally possesses much ability of this kind before he is old enough to leave the high school, or, in France, even the *lycée*. His life is made up of snap-shot observations and impressions, and if he is hurried too much in trying to organize these, he will write only studiously conceived nothings. On the other hand, when he really knows what an author means in a given instance, when he sees well enough and understands well enough to know what is there, he is likely to derive genuine pleasure from discussing the author's opinions or from finding examples of similar opinions, or principles, in the world about him. He sees

how an author looked out upon life, and he will some time come to understand why the author's observations and reflections have been so universally accepted by mankind. If in some such manner he does not develop the power of grasping an author's meaning and catching the flavor of an author's style, he will never be prepared to say anything that anybody would care to read, or that he himself would care to write. Recognition of this fact, supported by the conviction that young pupils normally spend most of their time in seeing and not in making critical classifications, may be said to account chiefly for the working relation that French teachers have established between reading and writing.

Concerning the second question, the relation of reading to the pupil's own style, it must be said that the best part of the influence of what the French boy reads comes not through deliberately arranged meeting-points of literature and composition, but through the general effect of the reading upon the boy's life. From his earliest youth he reads something that is sound and clear and beautiful. Not only that, but in the earlier part of his school career he is carefully writing down in dictation exercises a great number of the best passages from what he reads. And to these influences, powerful as they are, must be added the memorization of much that is acceptable in substance and form. Now if we but bear in mind that the pupil is writing incessantly while he is thus engaged in assimilating a great stock of good literature, we can easily see how his own style must profit. While his mind is quickened through much writing, he reads, takes dictations, and commits to memory. His lessons in literature, therefore, become so distinctly a part of himself that his style, without ceasing to be his own, inevitably takes on some of the qualities of the literature he has studied.

## CHAPTER VI

### FOREIGN LANGUAGES

EVEN in our utilitarian, so-called "practical" country, it is ordinarily taken for granted that the pupil of the mother tongue profits by making accurate translation of foreign languages. Generally, too, it is admitted that there may be other advantages in language study aside from this value of translating. These need not be dwelt upon here. The purpose of the chapter is to point out briefly the methods employed by the French in teaching Latin and the modern languages, and to indicate the manner in which these methods and the teacher's attitude toward foreign language study influence the pupil's own expression.<sup>1</sup>

#### I. LATIN

In spite of all the educational changes that have taken place in France in recent years, Latin is holding up exceedingly well, although Greek receives little attention. After the greater freedom of choice that came with the adoption of the new programmes of study in 1902, it seemed for a time that Latin would be lost. The subjection in which teachers of the Classics had held the rest of the educational world was so great that when liberty came, everybody wanted to take full advantage of it. But as the years

<sup>1</sup> The history of foreign languages in France, the programmes of study, and classroom methods down to 1905-06 have been treated by Professor F. E. Farrington in his *French Secondary Schools*. The early relation of French teaching and Latin is discussed also in P. J. Hartog's *The Writing of English*. See Appendix (p. 245). The historical view of French and foreign language study is interesting, but in this chapter I have preferred to adhere to the results of my own observation.

passed, and the many problems growing out of the new order of things began to solve themselves, the conviction grew that Latin was still important, almost essential, to a Frenchman's best training in the mother tongue.<sup>1</sup> At the present time, eleven years after the adoption of the new secondary programmes, Latin is generally regarded as an extremely valuable part of the upper years in the *lycée*, and it is believed that it can still be made more valuable. Even the most enthusiastic champions of the modern languages are quite firm in the conviction that Latin should not be allowed to go the way of Greek. This admission on their part, when we remember that they still hold a grievance against the Classicists because of conditions before 1902, is a strong argument in favor of Latin.

#### A. CLASSROOM METHOD

The classroom exercises are clear-cut in character, and they are enough alike in different parts of the country and in different schools to make generalization possible. In the beginning classes, there is nothing especially significant to teachers of the mother tongue save that the pupil has the advantage of knowing some Latin very early in life.<sup>2</sup> As soon, however, as we pass from the elementary classes to a class in which a text is read, we can see that the entire

<sup>1</sup> In the *lycées*, the per cent of pupils who take Latin is steadily increasing. The following table, published in *l'Action*, January 22, 1914, shows the increase since 1908:

1908 .....	53.27 per cent
1909 .....	53.76 per cent
1910 .....	54.72 per cent
1911 .....	56.29 per cent
1912 .....	58.29 per cent
1913 .....	60.61 per cent

<sup>2</sup> The pupil begins the study of his first foreign language at the age of ten or eleven, or even at nine, according to the course he means to pursue and his progress in the first years of school. He usually begins Latin at eleven.

method serves immediately to give the pupil a better working knowledge of his own language. Usually the lesson begins with a recitation of some memory passage that has been assigned a few days before. Then attention is turned to the reading assignment itself. First, the teacher calls upon some boy to read the Latin text. After he has read, the teacher makes such corrections as may be necessary, and then asks the pupil to indicate the grammatical or rather logical organization of each sentence. In the beginning, he points out the clauses: first the principal clause, and then the different subordinate ones. Next he indicates the exact function of the different clauses in the sentence; and when he has done this, he indicates the function of the different words. The purpose of this part of the recitation is to make the pupils understand the Latin manner of thinking. When the pupil who is reciting has thus indicated the relation of the parts of the sentence, he turns to the task of giving his translation. This translation is not in its final form a literal, word-for-word equivalent, as might be inferred from the close analysis of the text, but a thoughtfully made, idiomatic French version. The French in which the translation is phrased must be just as acceptable as the analysis of the Latin has been.

The reading assignments are rather long; and in the recitation, the teacher usually singles out a boy and pursues him with demands to read, to explain, to construe, to translate, until he has satisfied himself beyond doubt that the boy understands the entire assignment and can turn it into creditable French. Then he pursues five or six others in similar fashion. In the meantime, the remaining members of the class make notes, and respond when the boy under fire cannot. Moreover, in some classes at least, every boy is required to be prepared with a written translation. Then

as the recitation progresses, he revises this translation until it is faithful both to the Latin and to the French.

As one might suppose, the work in the highest classes is less stereotyped. The notebook of words and syntax holds a smaller and smaller place, and the explication of texts, the making of outlines of the texts studied, and the discussion of supplementary matters become more and more prominent. But the great middle period of the course is a constant drill in grammar,—the grammar of the pupil's own language as well as of the Latin.

I have never taught Latin, and my study of the language was limited to a course ordinarily covered in five or six years. It would be presumption, then, for me to pronounce judgment on French methods of teaching the subject, even if my observations had been more than incidental. Two or three questions, however, came to my mind when I saw the work carried on. I wondered, for instance, to what extent memory passages in an ancient language should be required of thirteen-year-old boys. The rigidity of the classroom exercises caused me to wonder, moreover, how far the pupils relied upon help from parents or older brothers in preparing their lessons; or how much they employed printed translations when they made their written versions for class. I do not remember seeing shelves in the bookstores filled with uniformly bound translations, or other "automobiles" or "aeroplanes" for private use; but I suppose they exist. This must be said, however, in favor of the French method: the classroom procedure is so exacting that a boy must know some Latin for himself, regardless of the means he may have employed in getting it. There is no escape from the grammatical analysis, the careful making of a good French translation, and the searching grammatical inquiry that precedes the work in Latin composition.

### B. THE DOMINANT PURPOSE IN TEACHING LATIN

One cannot long observe the French method of teaching Latin without seeing the dominant purpose of it all. It is not to develop a race of Latin specialists, although I believe the French rank reasonably high in Latin scholarship; and it is not chiefly to acquaint the pupil with Latin civilization, although this is regarded as more important than the necessities of scholarship. The chief purpose is to illuminate the study of the mother tongue. This is the one great argument, heard on every hand in favor of Latin. Teachers sometimes speak about the educational discipline of studying a dead language; they sometimes refer to the ideals of Roman culture; but they cannot speak for five minutes about Latin without convincing you that they believe its real value rests in its influence on a pupil's own speech and writing. "I can understand," said a teacher of Greek to me, "how you Americans might get along without the study of Greek, or perhaps even Latin; and although I love my own subject, I believe it would be possible for us here in France to get along very well without Greek, that is, the study of the language. But Latin, ah, it would be impossible to give it up. It would be giving up a part of our own tongue. You do not have to sacrifice so much when you put Latin aside. Your relation to Latin is remote. You still have the French, through which nearly all of your Latin has come to you. But if we gave up Latin, we could not look into the past at all. How superficial and colorless and unintelligent would our boy's notion of a large part of his own present-day language be if he had no notion of the Latin from which it is derived! And his habits of thinking, too, would suffer. Our thought-order is largely that of the Latin; and our whole thought construction and our natural habits of expression are

Classic." This is the attitude maintained to-day by many, perhaps most, unprejudiced Frenchmen. Latin is important in the study of French; therefore Latin should be kept.

This purpose in teaching Latin goes far in justifying the early beginning that the boy makes. He does not begin so young as he did formerly, yet at the present time boys of eleven are studying Latin. This early beginning may have disadvantages; if the making of great Latin scholars is the end in view, it certainly must have. Yet its good influence on the mother tongue cannot be doubted. The eleven-year-old child has a more active memory than the adolescent boy has, and as a result, he learns conjugations and declensions and vocabulary not only with greater ease, but with greater accuracy and surer permanence. He learns his Latin, then, early enough to make some use of it as he advances in his school course. There is no waiting till he is fifteen, sixteen, or even eighteen years old, so that the only influence of the study will be to disturb every language habit that has become fixed in his mind; he begins while his mind is plastic and unconsciously assimilative.

The close relation of the study of Latin and the study of the mother tongue is perpetuated, too, by the fact that in the upper grades of the secondary school system the teacher of the Classics is even yet to-day the teacher of the mother tongue. Very recently there have been numerous proposals to have the teachers of the modern languages take over some of the classes in the mother tongue, but the prospect has threatened such serious disagreement that the teacher of Vergil is still the teacher of French literature and composition. This arrangement has sometimes proved a misfortune; for occasionally a teacher has been so thoroughly wrapped up in his Latin that his teaching of French has been formal and heavy, with entirely too much emphasis on

fixed standards,— a kind of instruction that may easily result from the continued study of a tongue that is dead and unchanging. Furthermore, one is sure to meet some teachers who are extremely desirous of having their pupils reveal their Latin erudition. Occasionally when I visited a class in the mother tongue and asked the teacher about the influence of foreign languages on a boy's speech and writing he would immediately spring to the defense of Latin and, by calling upon members of the class to give derivations, the history of words, and the history of idioms, would prove before one's very eyes that Latin was infinitely more important than anything else in the school course. But because of the increasing influence of the modern languages, or perhaps merely because of the general educational activity in France during recent years, teachers of this extreme type are becoming fewer and fewer, and those who take a tolerant, charitable view of new subjects and make of Latin not an end but almost solely a means, are becoming more and more numerous. The possibility of having Latin pass entirely out of the rank of important studies after the adoption of the new programmes of 1902 quickly stimulated Latin teachers to new efforts to make their subject really serviceable; and they seem to be approaching success. In any event, they have had an unusual opportunity to work out the most effective methods of bringing Latin to bear upon the mother tongue.

Through classroom method, then, through the conscious purpose of Latin teachers in teaching the subject, through the fact that Latin is taught early, and through the further fact that Latin is almost invariably taught by the teacher of French, the subject to-day remains a large factor in the pupil's development of ability to write his own language. Its value should not be overmagnified, nor should anyone

understand that its influence is operative in the lives of the great body of pupils who do not take one of the Latin courses in the *lycée*, or the still greater body who do not take any course in any secondary school. But in the lives of those whose influence on the native language is likely to be greatest, it is and probably will continue for a long time to be a source of illumination and restraint.

## II. THE MODERN LANGUAGES

When we turn from Latin to the modern languages and their influence on the pupil's skill in his native tongue, we come upon a battlefield where very recently a fierce contest was waged. Not yet, in fact, has all the noise of the battle died away.

The record can be made very brief. Before 1902, the modern languages and the teachers of them were in educational subjection. The hours for recitation were often few, the time allotted to pupils for preparation was decidedly meagre, and the teacher's general standing was below that of the teacher of the Classics. In the thorough investigation of conditions that took place in 1898<sup>1</sup> it became evident that instruction in the modern languages was inadequate to meet the demands of the times; and when the new programmes of 1902 were put into effect, the teacher of these languages came to his own. He had more pupils, he had more hours, his work was accepted as having greater value than it had formerly been supposed to possess, and, above all, he was provided with a method distinctly different from the method employed in teaching the Classics. This "direct method," however, is really not new; it was

<sup>1</sup> This investigation was authorized and directed by the national parliament. The report of the proceedings has become a very important document in French educational history. See "Ribot Commission" in Appendix (p. 244).

accepted by the Minister of Public Instruction as early as 1828 as the best method of teaching Greek.<sup>1</sup> But its popularity is recent. And since it has had a sudden rise in France, since its effect on the pupil's use of his mother tongue has been warmly debated, since it has been modified in some respects only within the past two or three years, and since there seems to be much likelihood of its being adopted widely in American classes, it may be well to glance at the method as it is seen in actual operation. Let us see, for example, how the French apply it to the teaching of English.

#### A. THE DIRECT METHOD

The work in the beginning classes is a very active kind of conversation. Inasmuch as the boys who take English as their principal foreign language begin the study at the age of ten or eleven — sometimes at nine — this general activity is well suited to their interests. After the first few days, in which the time is devoted exclusively to learning the names of familiar things in the classroom and to mastering the present tense of two or three verbs, conversation is almost the sole means of teaching. Through it the pupils learn the elements of pronunciation, increase their vocabularies, and fix in mind the essential principles of grammar.

"Will you come to the desk, Pierre?" asks the teacher. Pierre rises, and as he goes to the desk he says, "I come to the desk."

<sup>1</sup> This fact was brought to general attention through an article by A. Dutertre, (pseudonym for a well-known Parisian teacher) in *Les Langues Modernes* for December, 1911, entitled *La question des méthodes en 1828*. The Minister sought a means of reducing the time devoted to the introductory study of Greek. Accordingly, he secured information from a great many teachers. Among other suggestions was one that embodied the essentials of the "direct method." To this the Minister gave his official approval; but before the recommendation could be carried into effect, the Revolution of 1830 broke out, and the "direct method" seems to have been forgotten, at least officially, until well toward the end of the century.

## 164 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

The teacher: "I give you this book."

Pierre: "I take the book. Thank you."

The teacher: "Will you please close the door?"

Pierre: "I close the door."

And thus the conversation runs until all the boys in the class are able to talk about the familiar objects in the room.

When the teacher wishes to introduce new words or to suggest new problems in grammar, he must make full appeal to his ingenuity. Perhaps I can best illustrate by taking some material directly from my classroom jottings. In a recitation which I visited early in the school year, the teacher wished to have the pupils understand the use of *this* and *that*, *a* and *an*, and *before* (in front of) and *behind*. He first asked a boy to go to the bookcase in the rear of the room. "Now," he said, "bring me that yellow book."

The boy took the book from the shelf, and as he started toward the teacher he said, "I bring you that yellow book."

"Stop!" cried the teacher. "That will not do." Then he picked up a yellow book from the desk and said, tapping the cover of the book, "*This* yellow book, but (pointing to the book in the boy's hand) *that* yellow book; *this* book, *that* book."

Immediately all the pupils saw the distinction and the boy with the book in his hand said, "I bring you this yellow book"; and then on his own initiative entirely, "I have not *that* book; I have *this* book."

In showing them the distinction between *a* and *an*, the teacher called upon several boys, one at a time, to write some nouns on the blackboard. They wrote:

man	floor
orange	aeroplane
boy	teacher
girl	apple

Then the teacher asked a boy to put the article *a* before *man* and to supply the articles for all the other nouns. He did not succeed, but the next boy supplied all of them correctly. Then the teacher inquired, "Why did you put *a* before *man*, and *an* before *orange*?" The pupil did not know; and his classmates could not help him. But they made a great number of trials and guesses; and when their interest was at its height, the teacher said, "In English, with few exceptions, a noun that begins with a vowel takes *an*." And the boys then spent two or three minutes making tests of their own to see that the rule held true.

Later in the recitation the teacher brought up the use of *behind* and *before*. To make the distinction clear he asked four boys to stand one behind the other on the floor by his desk. "Now," he said, "Pierre (the rear boy) is *behind* Jean." Then he asked a pupil to tell him where Jean was; and the boy replied immediately that Jean was behind André. And so with the next in the line. But when the teacher asked a pupil where the front boy was, the pupil was puzzled, because he saw that Ferdinand, the front boy, was behind no one. Then the teacher explained that Ferdinand was *before* André, that André was before Jean, and that Jean was before Pierre. The pupils then used the words several times, so that they were able to carry them away from the classroom with *a* and *an*, and *this* and *that*.

As the year progresses, these exercises gradually include reading and writing. In the second year, the reading lessons and the studies in grammar occupy a still larger place. By the time the boys are ready to enter upon their third year, their conversation has begun to approach the natural, they can use a goodly number of words that they do not find in their immediate environment, they can write simple sentences with some ease, and they are acquainted

with the fundamental principles of English grammar. They read many simple narratives and anecdotes in their English *camarade*; they read and commit to memory such poems as Longfellow's *Village Blacksmith* and Southeby's *Bishop Hatto*; they write exercises about their reading lessons and pictures; and they are able to frame questions about their own activities and the subject-matter of their reading. Frequently the teacher will call a pupil to the desk and request him to ask his classmates questions for five minutes. He must exert himself to think without delay of a variety of matters, and his classmates are as much pressed as he, since they must give correct and intelligent answers at once. I sometimes took charge of classes, and was often amazed at the ability of boys of this age (eleven to thirteen) to think and talk in English. When I asked them questions about reading and grammar, they usually made extremely sensible replies; they could write such possessives as *boys' hats*, *to-day's work*, and *men's coats* without apparent difficulty; and they used the principal parts of such verbs as *sit*, *lie*, and *go* with a degree of accuracy that was astounding to one who devotes a part of his time each year to the reading of freshman themes. When I gave them opportunity to question me, their eagerness was delightful.

"How high are the houses in New York?" was always one of the first questions. Some of the others were: "What is the most beautiful city in America?" "Is it as beautiful as Paris?" "Do you live in New York?" "Is Indianapolis near St. Louis?" "Is the Mississippi River larger than the Rhone?" "What ship did you come over on?" "Was it as large as the Titanic?" "Do you like Longfellow in America?" (I asked the boy if he knew any of Longfellow's poems, and he stood up and recited *The Day is Cold and Dark and Dreary* and *The Village Blacksmith*.)

"How do you get to the top of the high buildings in New York? Does it not take many minutes to go up in a lift?" In answering this question I used the word *skyscraper* and asked the pupils if they knew what a skyscraper was. After a moment of thoughtful silence, one little fellow said, "Oh, it must be an aeroplane." He knew the meaning of *sky* and *scrape*. Immediately a timid little fellow asked, "Have you aeroplanes in America?" "Of course they have," said one of his classmates, looking at him in utter contempt; "Wilbur Wright was an American." In this manner was the time taken up whenever the pupils themselves had an opportunity to do the questioning. Their ability to ask questions about matters concerning which they were anxious to know something seems to me to be the surest proof of their knowledge of elementary English.

In the third-year classes — that is, when the pupils have chosen English as their principal foreign language — more attention still is given to grammar and to the careful reading of texts. Just as in a lesson in the mother tongue, the recitation in the foreign language begins with an exercise in grammar, which is followed by the reading proper. The pupils read, and if they do not read well, they are asked to continue or to reread until their pronunciation approaches normal English and their reading really expresses the author's meaning. Then the text, which has been explained in a preliminary manner at the preceding recitation, is discussed thoroughly. The teacher first asks different boys to explain in simple English the general theme expressed in the lesson. Then he conducts a searching inquiry to learn whether the boys have understood all the details. He calls for the meaning of individual words, for the principal parts of verbs, for adjectives that correspond to nouns used by the author, and especially for the antonyms of adjectives. The

lesson is very much like a lesson in explication in the mother tongue, save that it is conducted in English and in a somewhat simpler manner. And in the higher classes, let us say fifth-year English, the recitation really becomes a lesson in explication. In the study of a poem like *Enoch Arden*, for example, knowledge of the story as a whole, knowledge of all the individual words, the ability to grasp poetic images, and the power to catch the full spirit of the poem are dwelt upon very much as if the text were French instead of English; and in the study of Shakespeare very much the same method is followed in English as would be followed in French if the plays were those of Racine or Molière. By this time the pupils know English well enough to talk with considerable freedom about *brinded* and *branded*, *a newt*, *an adder*, *a nickname*, *the howlet's wing*,<sup>1</sup> and other similar questions of language, to say nothing of the less easily explained subject-matter.

The advanced classes are strikingly different from the lower ones in at least one significant respect: the lessons include some translation. In the lower classes, as I have already explained, the mother tongue is not used at all — unless on the part of some teachers to explain a grammatical distinction that cannot be made clear in any other way — and the original intention of the champions of the "direct method" appears to have been to have no translation in the upper classes. After the method had been in effect a few years, however, it seemed wise to many teachers and some inspectors to require enough translation to make an unmistakably sure test of the pupil's comprehension of the text read and discussed in the foreign tongue. Thus it happens that in actual practice to-day the teacher of the advanced class frequently, if not usually, takes ten or fifteen minutes

<sup>1</sup> From a lesson in *Macbeth*, at the *lycée* for boys, Marseille.

at the end of the recitation period for the translation of the day's lesson.

Everything considered, then, if a working knowledge of a foreign language is the end sought, the "direct method" must be regarded as efficacious. The pupil talks well; he has sufficient knowledge of grammar to correct his own speech and writing; and he reads well enough to catch the spirit of the literature he studies. One cannot fail to be impressed with the comparatively good English that boys in different parts of France use in conversation; and when one asks them where they learned the language, the reply is almost invariably, "In school." Many boys have, of course, spent a short time in England; yet when due allowance is made for these, the number who can speak English well is strikingly large. And many champions of Classical training, despite the fact that several years ago they studied English in the *lycée*, always call upon son or daughter to write the letters that are to be written in English, and to explain the difficult passages in George Eliot or Thackeray. *Proviseurs* told me, too, that whereas under the old method the best the boys usually did was to read some English fairly well and speak it not at all, they now used the language so well that business men sought out graduates to go to England on important missions, since they could not only understand but could be understood in English. It is true that I occasionally met educators, even teachers of modern languages, who believed that the method had so many faults that it was not any better than the old, or at least was in need of radical modification. These, however, were comparatively few; and so far as I was able to observe, the only classes in which the method seemed to be more or less of a failure were the ones conducted by these teachers who were out of sympathy with the entire plan of instruction, and

permitted pupils to make substitutions of French whenever they could not easily express themselves in the foreign tongue. The teachers who were able and most conscientious were in favor of the method, with such modifications as would render it more nearly perfect; and many of them were firmly convinced that it must be extended to Latin if Latin is to be retained permanently as a vital part of French education.<sup>1</sup>

#### B. THE DIRECT METHOD AND THE MOTHER TONGUE

But what effect has this method, however successful it may be in the teaching of a foreign tongue, on the pupil's speech and writing in his native language? This is the question of moment to the American teacher of English; and concerning this question there is no unanimity of opinion in France to-day. By some it is thought that the method has worked absolute harm in this respect. Their argument is (1) that the French boy, however skillfully he may write to-day, does not write so well as he did formerly; and (2) that the falling off is to be attributed to the "direct method," inasmuch as it deprives the boy of most of his former practice of translating into his own tongue and obliges him for one or two hours a day to think, speak, and live wholly in the language of another people.

This question was so seriously and so vigorously discussed by French educators, and it seemed to me to be of so much importance, that I took it up for study. To be sure, I did not expect to find any positive proof that would settle the matter for all time, but I hoped to gain some light. Accordingly, I visited a great many more classes in English than I had originally intended to visit; I conferred with many

<sup>1</sup> One of these teachers had taught his nine-year-old daughter to converse with him in Greek.

teachers of the mother tongue whose pupils were taking the modern languages; and I prepared some definite questions and submitted them to the teachers and school officials with whom I came into contact from day to day, and sent many copies by mail to others whom I could not see conveniently. I asked (1) whether the French pupil probably writes as well to-day as he did twenty or thirty years ago; (2) whether the decrease in skill, if there has been any, is to be attributed to one or to many causes; and (3) whether the "direct method" seems to have had a pronounced effect on the pupil's ability to use his native language.

The answers revealed a variety of opinions. Some of the persons questioned thought there was, perhaps, a falling off in pupils' ability to write, but that the change was due to a general preoccupation with practical matters rather than to any method employed in the schools. Others said that there had been some change for the worse, but that the social conditions under the Republic were responsible, in that they raised the standard of the lowest only at the price of lowering the standard of the highest. Still others who believed there had been a deterioration thought the "direct method" partly responsible. They held, however, that with corrections and modifications in the method — some of which have already been made — the objection would be removed. A few thought any study of foreign language must always be dangerous to good style in the mother tongue; and some of these quoted Gladstone's supposed words, "I do not want to study French, for I should then have French injected into my English." Some teachers of English were of the opinion that the "direct method" has no special influence, either good or bad, on pupils' speech and writing; that perhaps the old method of translating, when well directed, really did help; and that if its passing has resulted in a

loss, it is to be made up by the teacher of the mother tongue. "If our teachers of literature and composition have taught French by teaching English and German," said one teacher with a bit of feeling, "let them now find a way of teaching French by teaching French." Some teachers, some school officials, and some laymen believed that pupils to-day write less elegantly and in some ways less correctly than they did thirty years ago, but that they write with more vigor and more sincerity. These persons had no fear of the influence of the "practical," and felt certain that if style is changing unfavorably, it will correct itself in due time. One man believed that the "direct method" has less effect of any sort on the mother tongue than the old translation method had, since under the new method pupils are not obliged to inject the foreign language into their own. They think only in the foreign tongue while they are in the classroom, and when they turn their attention to subjects that call for thinking in the mother tongue, there is no memory of a confusing jumble of distorted, half-translated sentences to fill the mind. And not a few were of the opinion that the "direct method" has its dangers, but that it is so thoroughly superior as a means of teaching the foreign tongues that it ought not to be abandoned or even modified, whatever its effect may be on the pupil's French. These proposed as a corrective, if a corrective should be required, that the pupil devote additional hours to the study of French literature and the practice of composition.

From a great variety of sources, however, came one opinion that outnumbered any of the others. It was that the decline in the French boy's ability to write is something apparent rather than real; that the good pupil to-day writes just as well as the good pupil did twenty or thirty years ago; but that the secondary schools, the center of the

discussion, have been so thoroughly popularized that instead of educating the chosen few, as formerly, they must now educate everybody. The result is, then, that the good pupils seem not to be so numerous as they once were. The men who held this opinion expressed the belief that it would require the microscopic eye of the most highly trained pedagogical expert to discern any real injury resulting from the "direct method." They were firm in the conviction that the new method is effective in its immediate purpose, and many of them believed that it could readily be developed so that it would be of supplementary value to the teacher of the mother tongue.

This opinion seems to be well founded. It is, of course, too early to say what direction the new method will finally take in France, since it has been established only eleven years, and is still largely in the experimental stage; but to an unprejudiced onlooker it seems quite premature to rule it out of the category of good influences on the mother tongue. To be sure, in the lower classes no opportunity to profit by translating is provided; and in the upper classes written translations are miraculously rare, while written exercises in the foreign tongue are numerous. Nevertheless, the method has value. The pupil, for instance, is trained in thinking, and good thinking is valuable, whether it be done in French or Chinese. Then there is the inevitable enlarging of the pupil's vocabulary; and there is also the habit of seeing and feeling words clearly and sharply. Moreover, such mental activity as one finds in the foreign language classroom cannot fail to contribute to a literary conscience. Habits of carefulness in choosing words, handling sentences, and analyzing thought may not influence a boy's speech very much immediately, but if they are well established, they will some day have their effect.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FRENCH BOY'S TEACHER<sup>1</sup>

If it were not a part of human nature ever to be forgetting things that are taken for granted, I should not make the commonplace observation that the teaching of the mother tongue resolves itself eventually into a question of the teacher. It matters not how ingenious a body of educators may be in devising methods, the mediocre or weak teacher, by following them imperfectly or by following them blindly, is certain to remain feeble and ineffective. On the other hand, the capable teacher will succeed to some degree regardless of method; he will soon work out a method of his own that will serve him better than any that might be suggested by another person. Nevertheless, he, more than his weaker colleague, profits by having boundaries fixed, by having general direction suggested, by having ends pointed out clearly; and he, in turn, in spite of whatever marked characteristics he possesses, will contribute infinitely more to the successful application of any method than will a teacher who merely fits into the machine. It should be illuminat-

<sup>1</sup> This study was made frankly from the point of view of the teacher of the mother tongue. If the reader is interested in discussions more general in purpose and more documentary in character, he should see *Special Reports on Educational Subjects*, vol. 24 (See Appendix), and the two books by Professor Farrington also referred to in the Appendix.

I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to M. Lucien Lavault, *proviseur du Lycée Gassendi*, Digne, for valuable suggestions about the preparation of teachers, the state examinations, the duties of inspectors, and the working-hours in the secondary schools, as well as for his careful reading of the earlier part of this chapter in manuscript.

ing, then, to see what kind of teacher presides in the French school: to study the preparation he makes for his profession, to understand the conditions under which he works, to see the kind of man he is, and to learn something about the spirit that he develops in his classroom.

### I. THE PREPARATION OF THE TEACHER

The course of purely scholastic and academic preparation required of teachers in France in either the primary or the secondary school system is likely to impress an American as being extremely formidable. The months and years are long, the study itself is exacting, and the entire course is full of examinations conducted by the national government. It is true that the great demand for teachers in the primary system sometimes forces school authorities to accept men and women who have not conformed in every respect to the highest requirements. In the main, however, candidates to-day fit themselves in the regular manner prescribed by the school system in which they expect to teach. For this reason it is possible to discuss the teacher's preparation with a degree of definiteness. The general purpose of his training and the limits toward which he pursues his study are, for a given kind of work, just the same in one end of the country as in the other, just the same in the small village as in the large city.

#### A. PREPARATION IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL SYSTEM

In order to be a teacher in the primary school system, the candidate must first complete a regular course in a lower and higher primary school or, much less likely, in a *lycée*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Even if he has completed a course in the *lycée*, he must have at least the *brevet élémentaire* of the primary system. He is not entitled to teach in the primary system simply because he is a *bachelier* from a *lycée*.

After he has completed this course he is ready, if he is at least sixteen years of age, to take his first important examination, the passing of which entitles him to his *brevet élémentaire*. This certificate is the essential minimum. It matters not what course of study a person may have pursued, if he decides to teach he is required to present this certificate; and if he pursues the regular course outlined for teachers, he must have it when he seeks admission to the normal school.

When he is once in one of the four score or more primary normal schools maintained for men,<sup>1</sup> he has a three-year course before him. During the first and second years, his studies are purely academic. They include history, one modern language, mathematics, natural sciences, manual training, agriculture, and much study and practice in the mother tongue.<sup>2</sup> At the end of the second year, the student takes another state examination over the work he has covered. If he fails, he is dropped from the school, since it is not thought worth while to train a teacher who is obviously deficient in scholarship. If he passes, he receives a certificate called the *brevet supérieur*, which admits him to the third year of his course. The last year is taken up exclusively with professional studies and such complementary work as may help to give the student general culture. The purpose of the year, according to the official programmes,<sup>3</sup> is to awaken the students to a need of con-

<sup>1</sup> There are about as many for women.

<sup>2</sup> The outline of the normal-school course of study in the mother tongue is too long to be printed in the body of this chapter. I have, however, included a translation of it in the Appendix (pp. 246 ff.). The reader should note how the work in grammar, composition, and literature is related, he should study the pedagogical directions that accompany the programmes, and he should remember that this course is for grade teachers.

<sup>3</sup> See *Programmes d'Enseignement des Écoles normales primaires* (1912-13), p. 57.

tinuing their intellectual development after they leave the school. Consequently practice teaching, pedagogy, the elements of law and political economy, and French literature and history have chief place. These are supplemented by readings and lectures on subjects designed to extend the horizon of the students, so that their special knowledge shall not be without background.

When the candidate has completed this last year of his normal-school course,<sup>1</sup> he receives a certificate to that effect, and is then ready to enter upon the two years of probation exacted of everyone who would be a teacher. If, however, he has done practice teaching in the normal school after he has passed the age of eighteen, this will count toward meeting the requirements of probation. When he has been a probationer, a *stagiaire*, for two years, he takes the examination for his final certificate for grade teaching, called the *certificat d'aptitude pédagogique*.

If, however, he should desire to teach in a higher primary school — and this school, it will be remembered, is much like our best type of manual training high school — he must make further preparation and secure a special certificate. And if he wishes to become a candidate for a position in one of the departmental normal schools such as he has himself attended, he must pass a competitive examination that entitles him to enroll at a special normal school at Saint-Cloud,<sup>2</sup> and complete a two-year course designed to fit him for normal-school teaching. Then he must pass an-

<sup>1</sup> Formerly the *brevet supérieur* was granted at the end of the course.

<sup>2</sup> The corresponding school for women is at Fontenay-aux-Roses. Singularly enough, the course in this school for women is a year longer than that in the school for men. In *Annuaire de la Jeunesse* (for 1913, p. 986) it is explained that theoretically the course for men at Saint-Cloud is three years in length, but that educational needs and the exigencies of the budget have thus far made only two years possible.

178 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE  
other competitive examination before he is entitled to a position.

The prospective teacher in the primary system, then, passes through the lower and higher grades, the higher school that corresponds roughly to one type of American high school, he goes three years to the normal school, and then, perchance, he goes to the special higher primary normal school. When a candidate who possesses adequate native ability has passed through this entire process, or even the major part of it, there can be little doubt about his general fitness to practice his profession. And there can be no greater doubt about his special fitness to teach the mother tongue. He must, in the first place, pass through the period of dictation, word-study, grammar, theme-writing, general notebook writing, memorization, and explication of texts that we have considered in the preceding chapters; he must, in the higher primary school, become acquainted with at least one foreign language; and in the normal school he must take more work in his own language and literature than in any other subject save pedagogy. This work in the normal schools, moreover, is very good in quality. I visited several classes in the primary normal school for men at Paris, and I examined a number of the notebooks kept by students. The teaching was exceedingly well done, and the notebooks were models of order and neatness. These normal schools contribute much to good writing. Furthermore, in the numerous examinations that the candidate must write from time to time along the way, composition is regarded as extremely important. If, therefore, we believe there is virtue in the study and practice of the mother tongue, we must admit that the teacher in the French primary schools is relatively well prepared for his work.

**B. PREPARATION IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL SYSTEM**

In the secondary school system, the preparation is even more comprehensive. If a young man hopes to become a teacher — and the preparation of a young woman must be in its larger aspects the same — he must have as a beginning a bachelor's degree. In other words, he must have completed a course in the *lycée*, which, we remember, carries him approximately as far as the end of the sophomore year in an American college, and he must have passed a state examination at the end of his course.

In meeting this requirement, he must take the regular preliminary work in the lower grades of the *lycée*, and then when he has completed the first cycle of his course proper, he must choose for the remaining years one of four groups of subjects: (1) Latin-Greek, (2) Latin-Modern Languages, (3) Latin-Science, (4) Science-Modern Languages. After he has completed this work up through the First Class, the highest regular class save one,<sup>1</sup> he takes the first part of his baccalaureate examination. If he passes, he takes as his last year in the *lycée* a special course either in mathematics or in philosophy; that is, he pursues one of these subjects as a "major." Then he presents himself for the second half of the examination. If he passes this successfully, he is entitled to the degree of *bachelier*.

The examination for the baccalaureate is, so far as one can see, wholly free from personal influence or prejudice, and it is, all in all, very difficult. Except in doubtful cases, nothing save the student's oral and written answers to questions is considered; and in the doubtful cases, the candidate's record in the *lycée* is taken into account only to ascertain whether there might have been any special circum-

<sup>1</sup> See the explanation preceding the programmes of study in Chapter II.

stances at the time of the examination to prevent him from doing normal work. The applicant is examined in eight or nine subjects. In the first test, he has three hours to each subject in the written part, which regularly covers three subjects, and an hour for the entire oral part. If he passes, he takes the second test (mathematics or philosophy) a year later. The jury consists of four, five, or six men, part of them teachers in the secondary school system, and part of them professors in the university located where the examination is taken. All of them, however, are strictly the representatives of the Minister. Perhaps it thus comes about that juries are so free from charges of unfairness and that they maintain such an uniformly high standard. In any event, only about fifty per cent<sup>1</sup> of the applicants each year are successful. So if a prospective teacher finds himself one of the fortunate half, he is justified in having no little respect for himself.

Theoretically a candidate need be only a bachelor in order to be eligible for a subordinate position as a teacher, but in actual practice one is rather certain to discover that the holder of even the subordinate position is a man who has continued his study and become a master (*licencié*). And if he is ambitious to become eligible for the best positions and the best salaries, he must continue his study until he is able to pass the examination for the *agrégation*. This examination is competitive, and usually requires three, four,

<sup>1</sup> In the October session, 1912, the proportion of successful applicants in the different groups of subjects was as follows:

Latin-Greek .....	45.6 per cent
Latin-Modern Languages .....	45.1 per cent
Latin-Sciences .....	46.4 per cent
Science-Modern Languages .....	41.8 per cent
(The second part of the examination)	
Philosophy .....	51.6 per cent
Mathematics .....	54 per cent

or even five years of preparation. This preparation is made in the superior normal school at Paris,<sup>1</sup> if one is so fortunate as to win a scholarship there, or it may be made in the advanced courses of one of the universities, or by private initiative. In any event, the work is chiefly academic in character,<sup>2</sup> although a certain amount of practice teaching is required. The examination is always searching and it covers a wide field; so if the general average of the candidates in a given instance is high and the vacancies to be filled are few, even a good man runs the risk of falling short. Viewed in one way, the procedure seems heartless,<sup>3</sup> yet everyone must admit that it is largely responsible for the high standards of scholarship and general ability maintained among French secondary teachers. The accepted view among the French is that if the nation has more good candidates for secondary school positions than there are positions to fill, and must as a result exercise choice, the choosing should always be made among those at the top.

Here in the secondary schools, as in the primary system, the breadth of the teacher's general training is noteworthy; and here, even more than in the primary system, is the training designed to prepare one to teach the mother tongue. In the *lycée*, we have already noticed, the boy's training in his native language is quite thorough. It must at least give him enough general knowledge and skill to enable him to write well in his baccalaureate examination; for one requirement, regardless of the course he has pursued in the *lycée* or will pursue in the university or special school, is that he

<sup>1</sup> Since this *École normale supérieure* became a part of the University of Paris in 1903, much of the purely academic work has been done in the regular classes at the Sorbonne.

<sup>2</sup> It is held by some French teachers that the examination is too exclusively academic; that experience ought to count for more than it now does.

<sup>3</sup> I knew one competent teacher forty years old who had failed repeatedly.

prepare a good composition on one of the three subjects assigned. And, as was pointed out in Chapter III, this composition is generally regarded as one of the most difficult parts of the examination, if not the most difficult of all. The candidate must not only be able to write with correctness, but he must have a fairly wide range of knowledge,<sup>1</sup> he must be able to think, and he must know how to organize his knowledge and thinking quickly. In truth, the examination is so exacting in these respects that it is in itself looked upon as a sufficient reason for learning to write effectively. From the early years of a pupil's life in the *lycée*, he is reminded by his parents, if not by his teacher, that every grammatical error, every misspelled word, every careless phrase, every feeble sentence, every heavy paragraph, every lapse of memory or error in judgment, will count against him on the day of reckoning when he seeks to become a *bachelier*. It is true that the examination may in this manner be overemphasized; the pupil is in danger of looking upon it as an end in itself.<sup>2</sup> Yet when one bears in mind the fact that good habits of speech and writing formed early in life are not likely to fall wholly into decay, even if the cause of their formation has ceased to exist, one may see that the long period of preparation for the baccalaureate is, in spite of all that may be said against it, a tremendous influence in favor of good writing among prospective teachers.

Moreover, the candidate for the profession of teaching who wishes to gain admission to the *École normale supérieure* will probably profit by some very good instruction

<sup>1</sup> See the list of subjects in Chapter III. One teacher assured me that the secret of passing the examinations was to write with intelligence, whether or not with knowledge!

<sup>2</sup> I believe, however, the pupils are reminded frequently enough that they are preparing to live a life as well as to pass an examination.

that belongs neither in the regular classes of the *lycée* nor in the university, but in what is known as the *rhetorique supérieure*. This is a kind of post-graduate course that has attached itself to a few of the *lycées* (for boys) at Paris and to the *lycée* at Bordeaux, at Lille, at Lyon, at Marseille, at Nancy, at Poitiers, at Rennes, and at Toulouse,<sup>1</sup> to meet a demand created by the rigid requirements for admission to the department of letters in the superior normal school. The history of these *rhetoriques supérieures* is interesting, and one cannot fail to wonder what the systematic French mind will do with them eventually, since they "refuse to classify" in the carefully organized educational system of the nation. It is enough for our purpose, however, to know that in these courses students receive excellent training in the mother tongue. It scarcely need be said that whatever writing is required is done with critical thoughtfulness, for the competitive examination is always before the student as an incentive to his best effort. The study of literature is likewise more serious and more thorough than the work in the regular classes of the *lycée*, and while it really corresponds to first-year or second-year work in the university, it is free from the ultra-critical spirit that sometimes prevails in university classes. It is the opinion of many French teachers — though not all — that this instruction in the mother tongue is the most effective, the most perfectly balanced, to be found anywhere in the upper institutions of learning. In any case, its effect upon the secondary schools of the land is considerable. The courses, it is true, attract comparatively few students; but these are the very ones who through their positions as teachers will be most influential in shaping habits of speech and writing.

<sup>1</sup> Based on tables published in 1913.

The later training in the superior normal school or university is likewise well suited to a teacher's needs. If he wishes to become an *agrégé* in letters, his three, four, or more years are sure to be devoted in large part to courses in his native language and literature. Furthermore, he spends many fruitful years in the study of foreign languages, so that he has a wide language field in which he is at home and at ease. After such training, he is not in very serious danger of being embarrassed in his own classroom by feeling that his pupils are about to force him to the limits of his knowledge.

Just how extensive the teacher's training actually is may be seen in some statistics that I brought together. It seemed to me as I observed the usual method of preparing teachers, that it would be illuminating to observe how perfectly the procedure was carried out in specific instances and compare the resulting preparation with that of American teachers of the same rank. I began by securing information about sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers in cities and towns ranging from New York down to the rural county-seat of three or four thousand inhabitants. This information I secured from the superintendents, who were asked to select teachers that were really representative of their cities. Then I secured similar information from French cities and towns of corresponding size, that is, from Paris down to the smallest town that supports a *lycée*.<sup>1</sup> Of the total number of American teachers reported, forty-four per cent had graduated from high school or some private school of equal rank and had spent at least two years in a college or normal

<sup>1</sup> *Proviseurs* are not permitted to give out personal information about their teachers unless they are authorized by the Minister to do so. I found it necessary, therefore, either to ask each *proviseur* to secure the needed authorization, or to have the individual teachers approve in writing the information which the *proviseur* desired to give me.

school, so that they might safely be regarded as having the equivalent of a *lycée* education. The other fifty-six per cent had either attended a college or normal school only one year, or had merely graduated from a high school, or had not finished the high-school course. As to university training, a few had gone to some university long enough to make an average of seven days for each teacher reported. In contrast with this, all the French teachers had graduated from a *lycée* or other institution of similar rank, and their advanced work in university courses averaged three and three-tenths years<sup>1</sup> for each teacher. It is useless to deny that this great difference must reveal itself in the teacher's grasp of his native tongue. And the difference is not only in his direct knowledge of his own language and literature, but in his background of knowledge. For instance, these American teachers had taken in high school, college, and university, an average of four years<sup>2</sup> of foreign languages; the French teachers, an average of seventeen and five-tenths years. Now I am well aware that purely academic training does not in itself make a teacher, but if other things are equal — and we shall see later in the chapter that the French teacher is not deficient in good personal qualities — sound training must give its possessor a tremendous advantage in carrying on his work.

## II. THE TEACHER'S POSITION

### A. HIS RELATION TO THE STATE

A teacher who has been admitted to full standing in his profession is an officer of the French Republic. In consequence, his position is quite different from that occupied by

<sup>1</sup> This average does not include the time some of the teachers had spent in post-graduate work in a *lycée*; that is, in the *rhetorique supérieure*.

<sup>2</sup> That is, the equivalent of four year-courses.

a teacher who may be employed or discharged at the pleasure of local officials or local politicians. To begin with, the official relation somewhat restricts his activities, although it cannot be said that he is hampered at all in the discharge of his professional duties. He is not permitted, any more than other government officials, to engage in fundamentally unpatriotic practices or to bring seriously into question his loyalty to the nation he serves. On the other hand, he is protected. As long as he is competent, the government must find a position for him. If it does not, it must pay him his salary anyhow. Furthermore, he is protected from politics and petty machinations. He did not get into his profession through any political "pull," and he may not be dismissed save on grounds that are scrupulously meritorious. To be sure, local conditions may make it seem wise to change him from one school to another, but if his loyalty to France is unquestioned and he is a competent teacher, he is assured of a position somewhere.

#### B. HIS STANDING IN THE COMMUNITY

The teacher's official character, combined with the fact that he really won his way into his profession, goes far in determining his standing in the community. He bears the approving stamp of the national government, and he has shown that he is not without a degree of intellectual strength, for has he not passed a long line of state examinations? In that regard his standing is like that of civil-service physicians or engineers in our own country. His neighbors may not like the profession of teaching, and they may feel that the school is not accomplishing what it should, but they must admit that the teacher himself is a man of some attainments. He deserves and receives respect.

## C. HIS LIFE WITHIN THE SCHOOL

But what, one may ask, is the teacher's life in the school itself? Granted that he commands respect from his fellow citizens, does the school system make it possible for him to do effective work?

Doubtless an American teacher would wish to know first of all about the relation of the teacher and the head of the school, that is, the person who corresponds to our superintendent or principal. Now, in order that the French teacher's position may be understood aright, it should be fixed in mind for all time that there is no one who corresponds exactly to our American town or city superintendent. The *proviseur* in the secondary school system and the *directeur* or *directrice* in the primary system have only a part of the superintendent's duties, and these are, in many respects, those duties which seem least important. The *proviseur*, who seems to the casual observer to approach the superintendent in official capacity, hears so many complaints and receives so many visitors that he might well be likened to a grade-school principal. It seemed to me sometimes that making small "adjustments" was his chief business. Often as I sat in the waiting-room, the sound of stormy conversation made its way through the door; and in the course of the year, as I waited my turn to see *proviseurs*, I saw scores of weeping pupils, and almost as many angry, weeping parents, emerge submissively from the inner office. The *proviseur* in the smaller *lycée* has a personal acquaintance with most of his pupils,<sup>1</sup> and every *proviseur* seems to have a good working knowledge of his school. But his official relation to his teachers is quite another matter.

<sup>1</sup> One *proviseur* in a large *lycée* told me he was grieved to think that he really knew only half of his twenty-two hundred boys.

It is never that of the employer to the employed, but rather that of a skilled business man toward a colleague who through the necessities of trade happens to be a scientific expert. He does not appoint teachers, or make recommendation that is equivalent to appointment, and he does not dismiss them. Given a certain body of workers — and it must be said that he is usually provided with a competent force — he is asked to smooth out the rough places in administration, bring his teachers into the best possible spirit for doing good work, and maintain a working relation with the parents. His duties may be summed up, I believe, in the words of one *proviseur* who has been very successful: "We have no authority except that which we assume, and we must be diplomats every day and all day long."

The teacher, however, is not free from accountability to some immediate higher authority. This authority is the body of inspectors maintained as a part of the school system. At the top there are more than two dozen inspectors-general,<sup>1</sup> who cover the entire country for the Minister and report to him on the large aspects of education. Then there is in each of the eighty-six *départements* of the country one *académie* inspector who is directly responsible to the *recteur* of the *académie* of which the given *département* forms a unit. Of course, neither the inspectors-general of primary education nor the *académie* inspectors can give a great deal of attention to the thousands of elementary schools in the primary system. For the making of personal observation and personal suggestion in these schools, each *académie* maintains a force of special primary inspectors. The teachers are directly responsible to these lowest inspectors;

<sup>1</sup> In secondary education there are fourteen: four in science, seven in letters, and three in modern languages. In primary education there are eleven.

these in turn to the *académie* inspectors; and these, through the *recteur*, to the Minister, who holds a check on both teachers and inspectors through his inspectors-general.

This inspection, especially in the primary system, is exceedingly valuable, not only because the teachers receive many sound suggestions when the inspector makes his occasional visits, but because the mere existence of a well-trained inspector is stimulating to any teacher who has a degree of self-respect. Here is a man, he reasons, who is seeing school work every day. He knows, therefore, when work is well done. He will examine my record for the year, or some part of the year, he will study my classroom methods, he will test the progress my pupils have made, he will see whether I have carried out the *arrêtés* issued by the Minister, and his report will determine whether I receive the minimum or the maximum increase in salary next year. This is the attitude of the teacher. The good effect of inspection is increased too, by the fact that the inspector-general is, in a way, a disinterested observer. Inasmuch as regular promotion does not permit him to remain long in one place or have charge of one section of the country for a very long time, he has neither the desire nor the opportunity to build up a "machine." He can give his energy quite freely to carrying out the dictates of his best judgment.

It cannot be said that a system of inspection of this kind robs a teacher of his individuality. It is true that in the secondary school system the *académie* inspector makes recommendations for all appointments, and that in the primary system he recommends the appointment of *stagiaires*, the probationers in the profession, and that he has a share with the *préfet* in making out the roll of teachers for a given *département*. Yet there is little opportunity for him to make a mere cog out of a teacher. All that he may demand

is that the teacher do his work, and do it well. In the manner of doing it the teacher makes the fullest use of his own individuality and his own ingenuity. Even in the choice of textbooks, the teachers themselves, rather than any board or committee, make up the court of decision. Moreover, when a given textbook is pronounced good by teachers, it does not follow that a certain teacher must use this one book. Instead of an exclusive adoption there is an approved list from which a choice may be made. It is not unusual to see in publishers' catalogues a statement that such and such books are on the approved list in the city of Paris (or some other city), when this approval seems to be a good advertisement for the book in other parts of the country. The teacher is not unduly restricted; but he is made to feel that his presence in the classroom must produce a wholesome and permanent effect on the lives of his pupils.

The average time actually spent in classroom work by the French teacher is materially shorter than the average in American schools. In the lower grades of the primary system, it is true, the hours are almost as many as in American schools; but the comparatively few hours required in the secondary system serve to bring the average down. The maximum number of hours is fixed by law, and depends upon the subject and the grade in which the teaching is done. In the mother tongue, for example, a teacher of a class that corresponds to our eighth grade is required to teach fourteen hours a week. If emergency arises, he may be asked to teach not more than two additional hours; but for this extra time he receives additional pay. In the study of representative groups of teachers referred to in an earlier part of this chapter, I found that the French secondary teachers of the mother tongue in what

would be our sixth, seventh, and eighth grades actually taught 14.6 hours a week; the American teachers of the same grades taught 26.2 hours.

The French secondary school is built upon the conviction that a teacher cannot do his best work in the classroom unless he has time for self-improvement and recreation. Moreover, it is borne in mind that the teacher of the mother tongue has almost innumerable compositions to grade, and that he must do this work with some degree of deliberation. He has plenty to do. I did not find a teacher complaining about the discomforts of idleness.<sup>1</sup> But unless he chooses to earn additional money by taking some private pupils, he may have several hours of freedom each week. And best of all, this time is really his own. He can take the broader view of his future, and if he does not wish to turn at once to "producing something," he is at liberty to build a deep foundation for whatever he hopes to do when he is thoroughly mature. Fortunately, there is no committee on educational weights and measures pursuing him with questions about what he works at before breakfast or how he and his family spend their Saturday afternoons. The organization of the *lycée*, moreover, makes it unnecessary for him to serve on many purely administrative committees. He is expected to bring full knowledge and inspiration to his classes and to direct the pupils' work effectively. He may do more if he chooses; but more is not required of him.

#### D. SALARIES

The salaries of French teachers are not high; but they are, I believe, higher than they are usually thought to be.

<sup>1</sup> One school official told me that he believed some teachers would do better work if they were required to do more teaching. I am sure, however, that the number in that class is very small.

In the primary system the teacher receives a salary proper ranging from 1100 francs (roughly \$220) to 4100 francs (\$800); he is provided with a house for himself and his family, and the law specifies in detail what this house shall be; and if he lives in a town or city of more than a thousand inhabitants, he receives what is known as a residential indemnity, ranging from 100 francs to 800 francs according to the size of the town or city, to offset the prevailing higher prices.<sup>1</sup> This total compensation seems wholly inadequate when it is viewed in relation to the service rendered; for the primary teachers, notably in the middle grades, do their work with great faithfulness and skill. But when one remembers that the salary, house, and residential indemnity are absolutely certain, and that the teacher, as we shall see, receives a pension when he is too old to work, it is possible to understand why he continues in the profession. He is not quite so badly off as he at first appears.

In the secondary system the teacher is distinctly more fortunate. Salaries for teachers in full standing range from 4200 francs (for beginners) to 6200 in the provinces, with an additional 400 in Lyon, Marseille, and Bordeaux; and from 6000 to 9500<sup>2</sup> francs in Paris. These amounts, unlike the salaries in the primary system, represent all that the teacher receives, unless he does the hours of extra work

<sup>1</sup> See Pichard's *Code de l'Instruction primaire* (edition of 1912), pp. 314 ff., 680 f., and 340 f. for the schedules of salaries, the specifications for houses, and the scale of indemnities. At the outbreak of the present European war the salaries of teachers in both school systems were the center of much discussion in the newspapers. Many secondary teachers felt that they suffered in comparison with officers in the army, and the primary teachers complained of the system of promotion.

<sup>2</sup> Only a few go beyond 8500 francs. Those who receive more than this amount are called *hors classe*. The schedule of salaries down to 1910 may be found in Wissemans's *Code de l'Enseignement secondaire* (edition of 1910). There have been some increases since that time.

referred to in a preceding paragraph. But inasmuch as the amounts are fixed by law and do not represent any fictitious scale that is applied only in a few special cases, the teachers are in reasonably good circumstances in so far as ordinary comforts are concerned.

In studying the representative groups of teachers already referred to, I secured definite information about salaries. The grades studied were the sixth, seventh, and eighth, with the corresponding grades in the *lycées*, and in every case the teachers reported upon taught the mother tongue. The superintendents were free to choose any schools in their cities, provided only that they reported on all the teachers in a given school who taught the mother tongue in these grades. Although the salaries received by teachers in representative New York City schools were higher than those received anywhere in France, those received by the French teachers in the smaller towns so far exceeded what the teacher in the small American town received that the average for the French teachers was actually higher than that for the Americans. For the groups of French teachers the average was \$1094.50; for the Americans, \$798.<sup>1</sup>

It is true that a comparison of this kind would not hold so advantageously in favor of the French teacher if the

<sup>1</sup> It is amusing to hear the European discuss American salaries. He seems to believe that most Americans are millionaires, and that while teachers may not be, they must be exceedingly well-to-do. One writer in a Paris daily paper recently declared that American secondary teachers received more than 25,000 francs (\$5000) a year. His evidence, I learned, was the testimony of an American who had not explained to him the difference between an American college, included in a university, and a French *collège*, which is theoretically the same kind of institution as a *lycée* but is really below it in rank. And even then, how many American college teachers receive \$5000 a year? This writer, of course, did not know that the average salary for teachers in a large number of small high schools in the United States is scarcely \$600. For a study of salaries in the state of Indiana, see the *School Review*, vol. 21, p. 446 (September, 1913).

classes chosen were higher in the school course. American high-school teachers usually receive larger salaries than the teachers of the middle and upper grades of the same town or city, while in the French *lycée*, above the elementary classes, teachers with the same training, experience, and success receive the same salaries regardless of the grades in which they work. The French teacher, however, has the distinct advantage of knowing that his salary is assured year after year, and he is saved from seeing the least skilled laborer receiving a wage higher than his own.

The teacher, moreover, always has a higher salary held clearly before him. His promotion may not be rapid, and it may not carry him to the highest-salaried class of all, but some advancement is sure to come. If he shows marked skill, he is likely to receive the maximum increase in the minimum time. If he is just a good, substantial teacher without special ability, the increase will come slowly, but it will come, sooner or later. The inspector's recommendation may hasten a teacher's promotion, and it may carry him without unnecessary delay to the highest classification; but some advancement is provided for by law merely on the ground that the teacher continues to teach. If he is good enough to remain in the service, it is argued, he is good enough to have some increase in salary as he advances in years.<sup>1</sup>

#### E. PENSIONS

The French teacher is encouraged in his work, too, by the assurance of a pension at the end of his active career. In the primary system, if a teacher has been in active service for twenty-five years and is fifty-five years of age, he retires

<sup>1</sup> In the secondary system the proportion between service and the recommendation of the inspector is fixed. It is: service, eighty-five per cent; choice of the inspector, fifteen per cent.

on a pension for the rest of his life. When he begins to teach, he pays into a government fund one-twelfth of his initial salary, and during his service, five per cent of the salary he receives annually. The additions, too, in his successive promotions are subject to the initial tax of one-twelfth. Then, when he retires, he receives annually from this fund one-half of the average salary he received during the best six years of his career. And if, in addition to his regular salary, he received during these years any other emoluments that were subject to assessment for the pension fund, his pension is increased in due proportion.<sup>1</sup> In the secondary school system the provision for pensions is in all its larger aspects the same, save that the pension is based on the last six years of a teacher's service, whether or not they are the ones commanding the highest salary, and that the teacher may not retire until after he has taught thirty years and has attained the age of sixty.<sup>2</sup> In either system, if he teaches more than the number of years fixed by law, his pension is correspondingly higher when he does withdraw from service. In the primary system, each additional year adds one-fiftieth to his pension; in the secondary system, one-sixtieth. In both systems, too, provision is made for pensioning the widows and orphans of teachers. If a teacher leaves a widow who was married to him at least six years before his death, she is eligible to a part of his pension; and if for any reason she is not eligible, or if she is eligible but dies, the teacher's orphans receive the pension that otherwise would have been paid to the widow.

<sup>1</sup> See Pichard's *Code de l'Instruction primaire* for the full text of the laws here summarized. The page references are too numerous to cite. See pp. 899 ff. (edition of 1912) for an index to the laws.

<sup>2</sup> See Wissemans's *Code de l'Enseignement secondaire*, under the index heading "Pensions civiles," pp. 398 ff. (edition of 1910).

The French teacher, then, especially in the secondary and the higher primary schools, occupies a position that enables him to do effective work comfortably. He holds an official position that is important in the eyes of the national government; he teaches in a system that is at once exacting and stimulating; and the guarantee of an income for life if he performs his duty faithfully enables him to face the future with a degree of calm. Certainly he may not be a "leading citizen" whose name and likeness appear prominently in the newspapers every day; and he receives little of the nervous honor that is bestowed upon the man of public affairs. But he is enabled to take the larger, longer view of work that such a comprehensive subject as the mother tongue insistently demands. He need not hesitate to make thorough preparation for teaching, since thorough preparation receives unquestioned recognition; and he may use his own best judgment in enriching his life so that his teaching may become more and more effective through the power of stimulating suggestion.

### III. PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TEACHER

It might be inferred from the rather wide differences between the primary and secondary schools that there would be two fairly distinct classes of teachers in the nation. In most respects, however, the classes are not sharply marked. It is true that the *instituteur* in the lower primary schools frequently wears an expression of grim determination to hold on to life and respectability that is quite in contrast with the air of the prosperous-looking *professeur* in the secondary schools; yet so many of these differences may be observed within either one of the school systems that it is difficult to say that certain professional characteristics

belong exclusively to the one or the other. And the differences that do exist are scarcely noticeable when one compares the secondary teachers with those in the higher primary schools. Moreover, the younger generations of teachers in the two systems seem much more alike than the older generations. Whether this means that the differences are disappearing or that time and the heavier hours in the primary system have not yet had their full effect, I do not know. But even where the differences are most pronounced, the important characteristics are so much the same in both systems that we may safely consider the two groups together.

A hasty or casual view might lead one to believe that nothing distinguishes the French teacher. He goes about his work with so much of an air of doing what is inevitable and taken for granted, that one is in danger of missing the essential strength of his teaching. Observation in a large number of schools, however, is sure to give outline and distinctness to certain characteristic qualities and practices that are powerful in their ultimate effect upon the pupil's mind.

#### A. CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

In the first place, the fact that the French teacher is distinctly a member of a well-established profession gives him a conscientiousness and a feeling of responsibility that must almost inevitably be lacking in a teacher who expects to turn his attention to some other calling after a year or two. Instead of being a young man who very studiously devotes all of his money and vacations to preparation for the practice of law or medicine, or the pursuit of business, he is expecting to be a teacher always. "Here I am," he says, "a public servant engaged in a responsible calling, and I shall follow it all the days of my life. I must, therefore,

make myself just as good a teacher as I can, and I must do my work so that it will bring me promotion and professional credit." The more remunerative position that he hopes to merit next year or some time later, the plan of his work for next term, the compositions that he must return to his pupils to-morrow, the success of his boys in their state examinations and in the work they will do after the examinations are over,—some of these matters seem ever to be in his mind. He is, too, extremely self-critical and likely to minimize the effectiveness of his own work, although he is singularly sensitive to the criticism of his colleagues. And once he has established his educational ideals, he clings to them with religious fervor. It is for this reason, I believe, that the French teacher is sometimes understood to be dogmatic. He cannot, however, quite be charged with dogmatism. Dogmatism usually implies either insufficient knowledge of the question in hand or an unreceptive state of mind. The French teacher usually thinks seriously about methods and aims before he accepts them, and he is quite open-minded, as some of the sweeping educational changes of the past few decades will bear witness. But he is not much given to the pursuit of fads, and he does not throw the old aside unless he is convinced beyond doubt that the new is better. His state of preoccupation is usually not antagonism to things proposed, but loyalty to something already accepted as essential to the success of his labors.

#### B. ENTHUSIASM

The most significant of the other characteristics center about the teacher's one great desire to create in the pupil a permanent state of mental activity. He is an enthusiastic teacher. Faults he may have, sometimes abundantly, but he does not suffer from a passive or indifferent attitude.

Not even in the highest classes in the *lycée* did I see any teacher droning along sleepily and dryly. There is no feverish haste, yet the alertness is noteworthy. The teacher seems to believe that any sin is less grievous than inactivity and dullness; and he sets a good example through his own enthusiasm, his own apparent delight in his work.

### C. ABILITY TO QUESTION

Again, the teacher seems to have mastered the art of questioning. The indolent boy who does not catch the spirit of the classroom when he enters is brought quickly to recognize his condition by means of the questions the teacher is almost certain to direct to every part of the room at the beginning of the hour. It should not be understood that the recitation is wholly questions and answers; there is textbook study and there is abundant explanation by the teacher. But in the course of a recitation, the teacher succeeds marvelously in asking every boy several questions. Sometimes the question is put to the entire class, and then some pupil is called upon to answer. Sometimes a pupil is requested to rise and then is not only asked one question, but is pursued with many until the teacher is absolutely certain that one pupil at least has a thorough knowledge of the lesson. Frequently, too, some other pupil is suddenly called upon to make corrections in a classmate's responses or to catch up the train of thought and carry it farther. Or, again, some pupil — or perhaps the entire class — is by means of questioning led about the subject in a way designed especially to encourage reflection. In some manner the teacher usually puts four or five or six boys through the more thorough-going test each hour, and manages, as I have already said, to ask the other pupils enough questions

200 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE  
to prevent their minds from wandering away from their work.

Usually teachers insist upon immediate responses. When I first visited classrooms it seemed to me that pupils had not time enough to make well-considered replies; and I still feel that teachers ought to ask more questions demanding leisurely reflection. Yet I came to see how valuable the rapid-fire questioning is in holding attention, developing the power of using one's vocabulary without hesitation, and fixing important knowledge in mind. The boy must see the subject from all sides, and he must exercise the power of recalling images and ideas. He is, then, immediately put on the road to easy memorizing. He is encouraged, moreover, to question himself, so that life will not cease to be interesting as soon as his teacher is out of sight. The entire procedure is at once stimulating and corrective. A boy is encouraged to take mental exercise — and this the normal boy enjoys — yet because of the limitations he discovers in his own knowledge, he is kept in a fruitfully humble state of mind.

It must be admitted that the French teacher is aided in developing interest in this manner by the naïve, boyish kind of curiosity that is characteristic of his race. This is not simply the intellectual curiosity supposed to belong to intelligent adults, but the desire to look upon, and perhaps marvel at, anything that is in any manner beyond the commonplace. And sometimes one wonders if the commonplace also should not be included. An example quite apart from teachers and schools will make my meaning clear. One morning I saw a crowd of two or three hundred people out in the middle of a boulevard completely surrounding one of the tree lawns. I supposed that an autobus had collided with a taxicab, or that an automobile had run over some

pedestrian. When I came up I pushed my way through the crowd, but saw nothing save two or three feet of crushed wrought-iron fence, the low fence surrounding a mound of flowers. I learned from some one near me that an automobile had slipped on the wet pavement earlier in the morning and had skidded into the fence. There was very little talking among the onlookers; they were simply gazing in curious wonder. The next day I passed again, and a crowd almost as large as that of the day before surrounded the spot. Workmen, messenger boys, laundry women, housemaids, men who wore high hats and carried sticks, and smartly dressed ladies stopped, crossed over from the sidewalk, looked for two or three minutes, perhaps asked a question, and then went on their way. On the following Monday, I chanced to pass along the boulevard again and still a fairly good-sized crowd looked at the broken fence. And even three or four days later when the red first-coat of paint on the new section stood out in contrast with the black paint on the old, a cluster of men and women stood looking on. This curiosity, usually amusing to foreigners who are in France, and usually regarded by Americans as a distinctly rural characteristic, unquestionably helps the French teacher whenever he unfolds a subject so that the exercise partakes of the nature of exploration.

#### D. SKILL IN INCIDENTAL TEACHING

Finally, the French teacher is skilled in what might be called incidental teaching. In classes corresponding to our first-year or second-year college courses he sometimes lectures, and in the lower grades he ordinarily uses a textbook; but he has the ~~background that inevitably makes his lectures informal and half recitation~~, and draws him away from the hard, unbending plan of a book. His training, to begin

with, has provided him with a fund of reserve knowledge that makes it possible to turn aside from the fixed path. He need not feel afraid. Furthermore, his maturity and his teaching experience have acquainted him with most of the situations he will probably encounter in his work. How mature he is likely to be may be seen by referring once more to the comparative study I made of groups of French and American teachers. The French teachers had an average of 21.3 years of experience.<sup>1</sup>

Now this deep background of knowledge and experience is valuable in the teaching of any subject, but especially in the teaching of the mother tongue. After the fundamentals in either composition or literature have become thoroughly familiar to the pupil, it is not only deadening but positively ruinous for him to try to make progress simply by following stereotyped directions. The teacher must make comments to supplement the good counsel of the textbook; he must make pointed, stimulating suggestions in the criticism of papers; he must illuminate the lesson in grammar with comparisons and contrasts drawn from his knowledge of the historical development of the language; he must make comparisons with the literature of other times or even other peoples; and when he takes up the systematic study of the text, he must vitalize and color the outline with his own spontaneous observations. I do not mean to say that every teacher one sees in the French schools lives up to this ideal; but the comparative fitness of most teachers to offer an abundance of incidental instruction must inevitably excite admiration.

<sup>1</sup> It is not difficult to account for this high average. (1) Comparatively few French teachers leave the profession while they are young. (2) The population of the country does not increase rapidly enough to demand the opening of many wholly new schools; so young teachers are needed only to fill vacancies.

## IV. THE TEACHER AND HIS SCHOOL

The spirit of the school over which this teacher presides may be summed up in three words, — respect, impartiality, and seriousness. The respect which characterizes the young pupil's conduct is so deep-seated, so thoroughly a part of school life, that it is scarcely possible to conceive of its absence. The teacher does not hold himself aloof from his pupils; he is sincere, he is sympathetic, and he is generous. But he never assumes the rôle of playfellow. In the classroom, even in the warmest, most spontaneous discussions in which the pupils may engage, if they have occasion to speak against an opinion held by the teacher or to question a position that he has taken, there is usually in their manner clear evidence of the fact that he is their teacher and not a fellow pupil or some friendly acquaintance. And outside the classroom, the same spirit prevails. The teachers walk about in the courts where the boys are playing, they watch them kick footballs, play tennis, or roll one another in the gravel, and they seem to enter into the spirit of the play. Yet if a boy thinks of something about which he wishes to speak to his teacher, he not only lifts his cap when he approaches, but he shows by his entire attitude that he is addressing a person who deserves respect. The teacher seems not to take unfair advantage of this attitude; he merely takes it for granted. He enjoys association with his pupils, he takes delight in their progress, and he sympathizes with them in their youthful schemes and castle-building. Moreover, they may love him so genuinely that they will enter a spirited protest when his promotion takes him to another school. Yet the bond that binds them is never that of equals, as may be true with our very young teachers and very oldest pupils, but instead, that of the wise man and the

inexperienced youth,—the inexperienced youth who would get wisdom.

Quite naturally, this respectful attitude is not so pronounced in the upper classes of the *lycée*. Young men of sixteen or seventeen are beginning to feel their importance to the world, they are beginning to place value on their own opinions, and they sometimes consider grievances so seriously that they resort to petitions and strikes. Yet in their personal relations with their teachers they reveal surprisingly little of the attitude of condescending tolerance. Either through youthful choice or through the fact that their teachers are mature men who will command respect if they do not receive it voluntarily, they prefer, in the main, to be respectful.

The spirit of impartiality, though less evident upon first observation, is equally prevalent. It manifests itself first in what might be called the social relations of the teacher and pupil. Under the Republic, the teacher is expected to have no social favorites. This equality of pupils before the educational law is illustrated in a national statute, nearly two decades old, that makes it an offense for a teacher to accept gifts of any sort from his pupils. The theory, evidently, is that there must not be even a suspicion of favoritism. But this ordinary fairness is a less pronounced characteristic than the larger, less definite kind of impartiality. The pupil seems to be living in an atmosphere that is constantly bearing in on him the fact that however much he may be mistreated or favored elsewhere in the world, here is one place where he is measured according to unvarying standards. Perhaps the long line of examinations conducted by the national government helps to give the school this tone; a timid teacher would certainly be sustained by the assurance that any fundamental or

extensive favoritism on his part would sooner or later come to light in the work of his pupils. But whether this be in any degree the explanation, it remains true that the boy accepts the situation as inevitable, and sooner or later comes to understand that if the standards are troublesome, it is he, not the standards, that is at fault. He has the abiding satisfaction of feeling that in school, at least, his work is not being overestimated.

The one characteristic of the schools, however, that impresses an American more deeply than any other is seriousness of intent. Even in the lowest classes the hours spent in the schoolroom are serious hours; and they become more so as the pupils advance in the grades. This seriousness is not gravity. There is nothing long-faced in the life of the school. The boys push one another into the mud, throw one another's hats into the tree-tops, wrestle, fight, and engage in all the other activities that are generally supposed to be invigorating and wholesome in a boy's life. Furthermore, there is within the classroom no deathlike quiet.<sup>1</sup> In truth, I visited many classes where there seemed to me to be unnecessary noise. And when I returned to America and had occasion immediately to visit a number of grade schools, this impression was deepened. The "order" in the American schools was better, and such movements as entering the room after play or going to the gymnasium or

<sup>1</sup> The discipline is firm, but not heartless. "Won't you forgive me?" asked a ten-year-old boy of his teacher at the end of the hour when the teacher had punished him by assigning him five additional exercises for the next day. "I didn't mean to be a bad boy."

"Well, I might forgive you," the teacher replied, "but you see we had a visitor, and you disturbed him also."

The little fellow then turned to me and asked eagerly: "Won't you forgive me? Won't you save me from five hard exercises?"

"They are not bad boys," the teacher remarked as the happy youngster rushed from the room, "but I must be firm with them."

assembly hall were executed with greater precision and less disturbance. But there was also less work. The French boy understands that he is to do something of some consequence as soon as he enters the schoolroom. Whether there is noise or not, there must be mental activity. Work, much work, much more work than the American schoolboy does, is taken for granted. A boy may be slow or mischievous, and for one of these reasons fail to make as much progress as some of his fellows, but while he is in the classroom, whatever his ability, he must have his mind in motion concerning the business in hand.

This spirit of work is increased by the fact that school life is comparatively free from distracting influences. Outdoor sports, though in evidence everywhere and though increasing in popularity, have not taken on the highly organized character of American interscholastic and inter-collegiate athletics. Again, the presence of only one sex in the school, that is, wherever small enrollment or some other local condition does not make coeducation necessary, gives the pupil in the upper grades more time for thinking about work while he is in the school building, and it saves him from the mental weariness occasioned by scores of class parties, surreptitious automobile rides after school, and numerous school dances. His social life is not indissolubly woven into his school life so that he cannot think of school without thinking of party. In so far as his social life exists — and he has much less of it than the American boy has — it is, in the main, the outgrowth of acquaintanceships formed through family calls and visits, family receptions, or other relations quite apart from the everyday life of the school. The pupil, then, while he is in the classroom is certain not to have "society" so borne in upon him that he finds it impossible to fix his attention upon work.

I would not have the reader believe, even momentarily, that I have forgotten the significance of a wholesome spirit to all school studies. But as I have already pointed out, the teacher and the tone of the school life have a peculiarly strong influence on the pupil's mastery of the mother tongue. Because of the very nature of composition and literature there is a demand that the teacher have broad training; there is an equally insistent demand for favorable conditions under which to teach the subject; there is need of sound pedagogical practice and a sympathetic nature to keep the pupil in a receptive state of mind; and there is need of the most rigid insistence on high standards while the pupil is forming his language habits. If a pupil is fortunate enough to have a teacher who is not only well trained but well fitted personally to do his work, other subjects will profit; but the mother tongue will profit immeasurably.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ORGANIZED LANGUAGE TRADITION

#### I. ORGANIZED TRADITION IN FRANCE

AMONG those who do not hold strongly to the belief that the French boy writes well because his native language is an exceptionally perfect medium of expression, it is somewhat the fashion to say that his skill is due to good language tradition. As far as it goes, this explanation is sound; but to go no farther would result in a serious misinterpretation of the facts. As Brunetière has pointed out somewhere, the literary classes of France long ago recognized the possibilities of influence through speech and writing; and they set themselves, accordingly, to the task of making their native language a powerful force in the world. Their effort, however, might not have resulted in a permanent, pronounced influence outside of literary circles had there been no means of disseminating their conviction among a large proportion of the French people. The schools served as the necessary means; and during the nineteenth century when the educational systems were developing most rapidly, this care for language that had been cherished before by a part of the people came to be the ideal of the nation at large. To-day, then, despite the many distractions in educational life, the French schools stand as a deeply established safeguard to the better use of the mother tongue. The so-called disintegrating tendencies in language exist in France as in other countries of the world just now, but they meet with a stronger, more perfectly organized resistance.

The effect of the schools on language tradition is not difficult to comprehend. The programmes of study pre-

scribe a course that requires the pupil to think continuously in the field of language and literature for a long period of years; and the organization of the educational system is so close that there is little opportunity to miss any essential part of this course. Then, in carrying out the programmes, the insistence that the pupil improve his vocabulary, master the mechanics of expression, practice observation, imagination, and reflection, learn to organize material and criticise his own work, become skilled in the grammatical structure of the sentence, know how to find out what an author says and how to read an author's works aloud, develop the memory and store it with good literature, and strengthen his grasp of his own literature by accurate study of foreign tongues, — the insistence upon all these things by a teacher who is well trained, not only in academic subjects but in the art of teaching, cannot fail to be instrumental in maintaining respect for language.

As was pointed out in Chapter I, the strongest evidence that the mother tongue in France is relatively safe against what we vaguely call "the modern" in education is the fact that nothing can be proposed that seems in any way to touch unfavorably the instruction in the native language, without calling forth warnings and protests against a "crisis." All the spirited, often bitter discussion between the champions of the Classics and the champions of modern languages and science during the past decade or more has been in very large part, probably even in the main, a discussion of whether the new programmes would not render impossible the highest and best kind of instruction in the mother tongue. I met many teachers of science who expressed the utmost enthusiasm for their subjects who yet declared that if it could be demonstrated that Latin was essential to the best teaching of French, then they would be

unalterably in favor of retaining Latin. This view represents the seriousness with which the people consider the question of their own tongue; and it indicates a small part of the resistance that must be overcome before it is fashionable for the French boy to write inaccurately.

I would urge again that I do not wish to hold up French schools as being admirable in every respect. They might profitably be modified in a number of directions. The French could, moreover, learn much about some problems in education (ventilation, for example) by studying what we have accomplished in America. But one thing they have done: they have held to the conviction that whatever else the school should stand for, it should be the exponent of good French. The organization of the system and the character of the instruction given in the schools have together borne this conviction to every corner of the country and to every social class. It may be seen, then, that good language tradition does not merely exist as tradition in spite of some vague "spirit of the times," but instead is organized, made not only defensive but positive, through the national system of education.

## II. THE LACK OF ORGANIZED TRADITION IN AMERICA

When we turn to America, if we consider our country as a whole, we find that tradition in favor of good language is very feeble. Moreover, what little exists is not thoroughly enough organized in our schools to make its perpetuation and growth unquestionably sure. We are so young, in truth, and we are so busy with the immediate business of subduing a continent and developing its natural resources, that we have little intellectual or artistic background of any kind. As a consequence, the teacher of English finds his problems extremely numerous and difficult. The teacher

in the high school, for instance, must not only deal with the very definite problem before him in the shape of boys who cannot spell, who not only know no grammar but hate the word itself, and who cannot give adequate expression to the few thoughts and vague feelings that save their minds from emptiness, but he must struggle, and he must help his pupils to struggle, against the overwhelming flood of incorrect, inaccurate, sometimes absolutely vicious speech that tyrannizes the community. Every day the pupil in the public schools probably hears scores of men who take pride in "butchering" the language, and who regard correctness or elegance of speech as a feminine affectation. Moreover, he looks about him and sees millionaires who say "have went," he hears millionaires' wives say "to he and John," and he hears ministers, lawyers, judges, and members of Congress say "you was" and "would of." So when he is assured from the desk that people of consequence do not disregard established grammatical usage, he is likely to think that teachers of English, as well as grammars, are only unnecessary hindrances to personal liberty and the free play of one's intellectual powers. And it is not wholly improbable that he will find some justification of his views in the expressed doctrines and everyday practices of teachers of other subjects. Furthermore, if he should move to another school, or if a new teacher of English should come to the one he attends, he would encounter so many new ideals, and so many new grammatical and rhetorical names, that he would be convinced beyond question that English is only a bugbear, and that it can have no enduring importance like manual training, agriculture, football, or "school spirit." He does not encounter anywhere an unyielding conviction in favor of careful, thoughtful speech and writing.

### III. ADJUSTMENTS NECESSARY TO ORGANIZED TRADITION

If, now, we are to train boys and girls to speak and write well, we must do more toward developing a literary conscience and we must fortify it by making our schools contribute directly and continuously to its sensitiveness and its strength. The task is a great one; but we can perform it if we undertake it with high seriousness, unselfishness, and patience. There is nothing in the character of what the French have done that we cannot do. They have chosen to be influential through their speech and writing. We, down to the present time, have chosen to be influential in other ways. In our rapid commercial development we have needed typewriters, and we have built the best ones in the world; we have had strong business competition in the making of textbooks, and these, from a mechanical or artistic point of view, are beyond comparison with the textbooks of other countries; we have needed libraries and stupendous railway stations, and into some of these we have put the best architecture of the age. We are not without any essential aptitude that may be necessary in learning to write; and we shall learn, at least to write with reasonable correctness and a degree of force, as soon as we turn our energy in that direction.

In order to make real progress in the teaching of the mother tongue, we must begin on solid, open ground. We must accept the situation as it is, we must make no effort to conceal or disguise its less agreeable aspects, and we must set about the solution of our many problems with minds that are open and free from pedagogical hypocrisy. Every teacher, too, must be willing to bear his share of the responsibility for conditions as they exist to-day, or may exist

to-morrow. This is difficult. We seem to be in the grip of a national malady that drives us to attribute undesirable results of every kind to causes that are beyond our control. Railroad wrecks grow out of the negligence of the engineer who was killed; bad schools are the result of bad homes; and bad writing is caused by some lower-grade teacher's negative influence—which, of course, cannot now be changed—or possibly by some singular neglect on the part of the Creator. Now, if we are unable to meet our problems squarely, or if we are unwilling to believe that conditions can actually be made better by conscientious struggle, we ought to resign as teachers of English, for we are securing money under false pretenses. We must welcome the opportunity to labor, and we must welcome any suggestion whatever that will make our labor more effective.

#### A. IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The first adjustment that suggests itself, though not the one that seems to touch the writing of English most intimately, is in the organization of our school system. Our schools are not organized to make good work in English easily possible. To begin with, the present rigid division into grade school, high school, and college, with each exercising such large liberty that it may almost be said to disregard the others, is not designed to secure the coöperation necessary in presenting such a delicately balanced group of subjects as constitute the course in the mother tongue. It does not contribute to good language habits. Instead of complete understanding and complete sympathy among all the teachers that a boy works under from the time he enters school until he is a college graduate, or even a college freshman, there is usually a spirit of narrow independence, and quite frequently, an attitude of open antago-

nism. The grade-school teacher says the high-school teacher forgets that it is necessary to meet the needs of the boy who drops out of school at the end of the eighth grade; the high-school teacher lays his pupils' sins at the door of the grade teacher, and then talks about the "domination" of the colleges; and the college teacher in his turn looks with scorn on high schools that graduate boys who cannot really be said to speak or write the English language.

Added to this confusion is the serious difficulty that results from trying to put all pupils, regardless of their aptitudes, their interests, or their purpose in going to school, into one rigid course of study. This is not done, to be sure, in the larger, better-equipped high schools, but it is done in the smaller high schools and in most grade schools. There is no adequate provision, such as the French have in the primary school system, for the boy who must seize upon a large number of essentials before he drops out of school to begin work at the age of fourteen or fifteen. Not only does the American boy who has like interests and who holds to the same purpose fail to get these essentials, but because he is often out of sympathy with the more deliberate mental habits of the boys and girls who expect to go to high school and college, he does not really get what the course, as it stands, offers to him. He is guided, without regard for his interests or economic needs, into the first work of the English course of study. Then school and college officials pray that luck may bring him out somewhere along the way in possession of enough skill to save himself and his teachers from disgrace. If he fails to have it, everybody blames somebody else.

My conviction is this: we cannot have the best results until a more genuine respect for the actual needs of others dominates our work. There must be a better working

relation between the lowest and the highest grades. Teaching the mother tongue will remain in a chaotic state until we have begun to accomplish definite things in definite places; and as long as the lower-grade teacher, the high-school teacher, and the college professor disregard one another, this end is unattainable. In our present state, it is impossible to fix responsibility in any given case. Now the remedy does not call for an ideal boy or an ideal teacher. All that is needed is a coöperative spirit and a course that is definitely planned and definitely carried out, so that when a boy has passed through a certain grade in the kind of school best suited to his needs, he will possess certain knowledge and certain skill — limited, of course, by his native capacity — which the teachers in succeeding grades may confidently take for granted.

In the second place, if we are not to give up the more or less distinct breaks that separate the grades and the high school, and the high school and the college, let us have them earlier in the pupil's life. The subject-matter in most seventh-grade and eighth-grade courses in English naturally relates itself more closely to what comes after it than to what precedes it. If, then, the pupil is to come to a point in his school career where he takes a new and firmer grasp upon his work, let it come where the subject-matter of the course makes a division most nearly logical.

Moreover, if the demands of the native tongue are considered, the entire school course ought to be simplified and compressed. Good writing, as well as good speaking, is largely a matter of habit; and habits are more permanently formed when the mind is alert, receptive, and so disengaged of non-essentials that it feels its own progress. When the pupil's entire mental life is warmed by means of continuous, concentrated activity, he thinks more clearly,

sees relations more distinctly, and is impressed by the world about him to a greater degree than is possible when he must be constantly reawakened. And this advantage holds whether the pupil expects to go to college or to turn at once to earning a livelihood. If he purposes to go directly from high school to an office or shop, his habits of speech or writing will profit by the stricter and more constant attention resulting from a compression of the school course; and if he purposes to go to college, not only will he have this advantage, but he will probably be a better freshman at sixteen or seventeen than at eighteen or nineteen. At the earlier age, he is much less likely to have become so engrossed in social activities that he "slows down" in his work. He will, then, probably enter college with better habits of study if he pursues a well-filled course that brings him through high school without a long period of mental relaxation. Moreover, at the age of eighteen or nineteen, he is neither a boy nor a man, yet sophisticated enough to demand the privileges of both. When he is asked to be careful in the mechanics of writing, he is surprised that such things are important to grown-ups; and when he is asked to do close, logical thinking, he is sure "the Department" has forgotten that he is not a candidate for the Ph.D. degree. His attitude toward college work would contribute more to his progress if he entered college at an earlier age.

#### B. IN PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

In pedagogical practice our most immediate need is not, I believe, in the school itself, but in the relation of the teacher to the community. If the force of the teacher's influence on the pupil is lost because of the language environment in which the pupil lives when he is out of school, it seems scarcely necessary to urge that if we are to make more

than a snail's progress, we must work on the community at large as well as on the pupils in the school. We teachers of English must set ourselves to the ever-present but easily forgotten task of establishing a closer relation and a more thorough-going coöperation between the school and the home.

We must become better missionaries. The spirit of enterprise and serviceableness, unfortunately for language tradition, has been left almost wholly to teachers of science, who, it must be said, have availed themselves of every opportunity to make the world feel how important they are to human welfare. Is it asking too much that teachers of English should display a little of this spirit? Wherever there is a group of teachers of English in a community, or wherever there is one teacher, should there not be a social center of good literature, good writing, and good speech? We must reach all classes, in so far as it is possible to do so, and make them feel that we are more than a mere luxury to the community. We must show parents how important it is that their sons and daughters should write good letters, good reports, and good applications for positions, and how essential that they should speak accurately and easily. In the smaller towns, newspapers might be prevailed upon to print instances of the importance of good English. If the moral in the tale did not hang too heavily, they might print the "stories" of how the skillful use of the mother tongue had helped boys and girls to secure positions that otherwise would have been given to some one else; or how the careless, awkward use of language had prevented even the best boy from "getting a hearing." One cannot talk many minutes with a college president, the manager of an employment bureau, or any merchant who possesses the least literary conscience, without learning of these instances. They

may seem very commonplace to the teacher and they may seem to him an undignified means of developing respect for language, but to the parent who is struggling for a livelihood they are fresh and new, and they invariably make instruction in the mother tongue seem worth while.<sup>1</sup>

We should not, however, stop with efforts of this very simple kind. We must encourage parents to hear good speakers, and we must find more opportunities for bringing good books, good magazines, and good plays to their attention. If we are conscientious and if we remain in one community for a very long period, we can establish much the same kind of profitable relation between ourselves and the pupils' parents that usually exists between teachers and parents in France. If in every grade from the primary school to the university, teachers of English would spend a little time each week trying to develop a favorable attitude on the part of parents toward good speech and writing, instead of saying it is "no use," or that it "does not contribute to scholarship," the effect would soon be noticeable. Many of the parents in our school and college communities would in a generation be coöperating heartily; and when parents and teachers coöperate, even the most obstinate pupils will yield. The stronghold of bad writing will

<sup>1</sup> Recently on a railway train I overheard an unsuccessful applicant for a responsible position as a construction engineer ask why he was not chosen. "Well," replied the chief engineer, "of the hundred and forty-seven applicants, you were one of the highest six. Any one of these would have satisfied our requirements if the other five had not applied; but we had to choose from the entire six, and we chose Mr. —— because of the excellence of his application." Here he opened a great bag of applications and drew one out. "Just look at that," he exclaimed. "Nobody could refuse that man's application. Look at the organization. Every point stands out so that you can't help seeing it. And see how straight his sentences are. That man goes right to the center of things. With his training and experience, and that sense of form, he can't fail to be a great engineer some day."

eventually capitulate — or at least be reduced to comparative feebleness — if it is attacked on both sides.

Within the classroom, if we are to gain any light from the French, our first great need is a more judicious distribution of exercises in writing. In many schools the work in composition, regardless of its quality, is quite insufficient in amount. Such cases, of course, will not gain much by any change in method until the course itself is strengthened. It is not, however, about schools of this kind that I wish to speak, but rather those that, having enough composition, fail to distribute it well throughout the pupil's school career, or else fail to adapt it to his needs. From information gleaned within the past three years from several hundred American programmes of study as they are actually carried out, and from a more hasty examination of the general outline followed in many other schools, I have found that very frequently, especially in the upper grades and in the high school, pupils are required to do much writing one year or one semester, and then during the succeeding year or semester do nothing at all, or, at most, write one long paper of some kind at the end of the term. Sometimes the lack of continuity is due to failure on the part of the superintendent or principal to provide time for continuous work; sometimes it is due to a teacher's desire to lump the work in composition together and have it out of the way once for all; and sometimes (heaven defend us!) it is due to a vote of the pupils to put theme-writing aside and take up something more interesting. But whatever the cause, the evil is serious, and should be remedied. The demands of variety may make it seem unwise to have the themes coming in at the same intervals year after year, regardless of the subject-matter upon which the pupil is asked to write; but he should never be permitted to lose whatever skill he has acquired.

He must work steadily, habitually. Otherwise his own loose speech and writing, and the speech he hears every day, will surely gain the ascendancy. In no other kind of school work is there such great need of regular practice and steady, skillfully graduated progression.

It is not my purpose here to attempt any detailed application of French classroom methods to the teaching of writing in American schools; the chapter on Composition ought to serve in itself as a sufficient explanation of what the individual American teacher might derive from the best practice in France. But one principle that dominates all the French teacher's work in composition deserves a larger place in our own classes; that is, the doing of the chief part of the work before the pupil writes, rather than after he has written. The principle, we remember, is applied both to the French boy's general preparation and to his preparation for a specific composition. How much we need to emphasize it may be seen by reflecting upon the character of our pupils' typical deficiencies when they are ready to leave school or college. And the explanation is not difficult to find. When a boy is old enough to have some ideas of his own, we ask him to write, and we then find that he cannot handle the mechanical problems of his task. Now, as has been pointed out already, a boy can and must acquire skill before he can do serious consecutive thinking; and he might easily have a mastery of the mechanics of writing through such practice as may be found in well-graded dictation.

In like preliminary manner he might acquire a much more serviceable vocabulary. Our pupils, as a class, are seriously restricted in their speech and writing because they have a relatively small stock of words at command; and they suffer further because they use words in a vague or a wholly incorrect sense. Early in their life, while the world is still fresh

and full of wonder, they should be led to explore systematically the neighborhood about them and to name the familiar objects that they behold every day. Then they should have similar guidance in expressing distinctions between less familiar physical and moral qualities, so that they can say what they really want to say. If the French could contribute nothing to the solution of our problems save their tried methods of teaching distinctions, they might well be regarded as great benefactors. They long ago found that the way to help a pupil to the power of seeing differences is not through the study of synonyms, but through the study of antonyms. The world stands out sharply in a boy's mind not when he sees likenesses, but when he sees contrasts. This, however, is not all that we might gain from the French in improving the pupil's vocabulary. We might in addition adopt the practice of requiring pupils to recall words quickly, so that their words will serve them in time of need. The object may be presented, and the word required, or a synonym or antonym may be used as the beginning. There are many legitimate kinds of association through which the word may be recalled. The matter of importance is that it be distinctly attached to the group of ideas to which it belongs.

We may dwell long and affectionately upon the advantages of the unconscious assimilation of a working vocabulary; but when we see the mastery the French boy has gained by the time he has reached the age of eleven or twelve, we must admit that the effectiveness of systematic improvement is not open to question.

Because of this belief in the efficacy of thorough preparation, the French can instruct us, too, in finding and developing material for compositions. Here again we suffer much because we rely so largely upon correction and criticism

rather than prevision. The extent, in truth, to which we have developed the art of theme-correcting is marvelous. Our educational journals are full of schemes that are guaranteed to save labor in marking corrections, of systems and symbols that will almost enable a teacher to hold a conference with a pupil without seeing him; (yet comparatively little is said about the best methods of interesting pupils in material and of encouraging them to meditate upon it, although these are the surest ways of saving labor and of making a delight of such criticism as must necessarily remain to be done.) We are strangely illogical. If we do even the smallest piece of writing ourselves, we think upon the subject, read discussions of it, talk with our friends about it, and only after we have digested it thoroughly do we venture to write. Nevertheless, when we assign a theme, which, to begin with, is looked upon by the pupil as a mere task set by some one else, we frequently do not discuss the material in any thorough-going manner, and we do not always show the pupil how he might become interested in his subject by talking to his classmates and friends about it. We do not help him far in getting ideas, save in a very general way, and we hesitate to put a plan on the black-board, lest he copy it and use it. We give him only the slightest straw to clutch — sometimes only a title of four or five words — yet expect him to come out safely, and to find pleasure in the struggle. He probably does neither. His mind is unaccustomed to catching up stray ideas and putting them in order. He may not even do his best in trying to learn how. He writes what little is in his mind, or fits together some ideas that he has garbled from a book, and calls the result his "composition." Then we spend many precious minutes showing him, or trying to show him, how to tear his ideas all apart and rewrite them into a new theme.

Certainly there is little pedagogical or personal defense for our practice. If the teacher helps his pupils to enrich, quicken, and organize their material before they begin to write, he not only stimulates them to their best efforts, but saves himself infinite pains.

Outside the classes in composition, our first step should be back toward grammar. We shall soon discover — possibly we are making the discovery now — that habit, though of the greatest importance in speech and writing, is not, unaided, a sufficient guide. To begin with, the pupils in many of our cities where the foreign population is large, and those in our smaller towns and country communities, hear so much incorrect English that if they rely on unconscious or subconscious memory, they are likely to be misguided. From habit they cannot speak normally, because they have no norm. They must, then, have recourse to usage as it is classified and recorded in a textbook. But there is a need for grammar beyond this. Even the best pupil must frequently examine and recast what he has written, and in doing this he must be able to handle the sentence skillfully. Now his early and continued practice in grammar, if it has been directed intelligently, has given him just the kind of knowledge and skill that revision demands. He can make the sentence do his bidding.

Many of the trappings that accompanied the older teaching of grammar in this country are not necessary to adequate knowledge of the sentence. The work may be simplified, it may be vivified through a close relation to what the pupil reads and sees, and it may occupy a relatively small part of the school programme. But grammar, real grammar, it must be. And there is little reason why there should be any attempt to conceal it under a sugar-coating of "composition" or "language exercises" or any other term less dis-

tasteful than "grammar" itself. We can lose nothing if we call it by its real name, and then teach its wholesome principles from the first grade to the high school. Moreover, in the last years of the high school we could increase the pupil's grasp of his native tongue by teaching him some of the elements of historical grammar. It is doubtful whether our pupils and higher students of English need anything quite so much as the steady influence that grammar, well taught, can give.

Again, we must teach the English classics, not present-day periodical literature. It seems exceedingly important that we should remember this just now, since much is being written concerning the value of courses in magazine reading. No teacher, I suppose, would deny the importance of having a pupil become acquainted with all the better contemporary periodicals. If he neglects them, he loses step with the world. But their appeal is so direct, they make such a pronounced conscious effort to interest him, and their material is so quickly understood, that he need not take courses in them. As a class, however legitimate their place in life may be, they are too light, too ephemeral, to require much explanation, much comment, much interpretation. They come easily, and they go easily. On the other hand, the great piece of literature, the one that is capable of making an infinite number of appeals to the same reader, must be looked at, turned over, reflected upon. Here the pupil needs encouragement and aid. He must be led to see that the classic, when he rightly appreciates it, is something that he likes. To come into this state of mind may be difficult for him, but once he does, he has gained a possession that will color and brighten his existence as long as he lives. He may become a reader of the magazines, as well as current books of fiction, almost any time in his life; but if he is

to be a reader of the best literature in the language, he must begin early and have guidance.

Moreover, we must have a less artificial relation between composition and literature. We do not need any intricate or magical balancing of reading and style, but only a larger application of common sense. Pupils of high-school age, or younger, can grasp well-expressed ideas much more readily than they can detect and express a writer's sense of form. Moreover, since the feeling for form that a writer carries into his work is often much more individual and personal than his ideas, different pupils are much less likely to appreciate it in an equal degree. Then, too, the same pupil's feeling for a given writer's sense of form varies greatly from time to time. It seems better, therefore, to base comparatively few compositions on criticism. Most of the time, young boys and girls who have compositions to write would rather discuss some good, wholesome idea expressed by an author than prepare any disquisition on his literary theory; and their youthful minds are in this respect fairly safe guides. The teacher can, then, help both composition and literature by asking pupils to write on what they really think when they come face to face with what an author says. Frequently they will be surprised to find that great authors say anything that one would care to know; so long have they taken it for granted that classics were written for the sole purpose of being dismembered. In their eagerness they will develop a desire to read; and when they read for the purpose of knowing just what an author says, they are taking the first long step toward genuine appreciation and a working knowledge of literary form.

We shall not, however, come to the fullest influence of literature on writing unless we place greater emphasis upon the cultivation of the memory. There can be little doubt

that the French are justified in their belief that the best part of the effect of what the pupil reads is not through any overnice interweaving of lessons in literature and composition, but in the general effect of filling the memory with the ideas, the phrasing, the coloring, and the movement of the writings of a number of authors. We are missing this influence almost wholly because our pupils have no great fund of good literature that they remember distinctly, either word for word, or in essential idea. And what is more deplorable, at the end of their school and college careers they do not seem to have memories that are at all reliable in retaining anything. We have talked much about the spirit of education, and in our heroic efforts to catch the spirit without first having the substance, we have come to look upon the exercise of memory as a very old-fashioned practice that ought to be discarded because it sometimes requires more rigorous mental effort than pupils are willing to make. As a result of this attitude, our boys and girls remember few things, and these very imperfectly. If a boy says that Job was a character in the Bible, or that Milton was an English writer who lived before the Revolutionary War, he seems to think that he has been sufficiently definite and that further details would be "mechanically" exacting. And how many of our school pupils or college students can recite even three good poems from memory? They do not know a great religious hymn, or a song from a good opera, and they cannot sing *America* or *The Star Spangled Banner* unless they have the words before their eyes. In so far as their memories are active at all, they are taken up with the cheapest songs of the hour (perhaps the chorus of each), most of which are below mediocrity in music and are either characterless or vicious in sentiment and expression.

Now I am aware that memory work might be overdone; but there is little danger of such a misfortune in America at the present time. We have gone to the extreme in the other direction. To go back at least a part of the way is our serious duty. If our pupils are to have any feeling for order, for movement, for all that is included in the word style, we must give them some permanent antidote for the poisonous literary refreshment they find for themselves, and we must help them to acquire a fund of good literature that will be a positive enrichment to their lives. It is quite useless to ask boys and girls to express themselves in English suitable to a given occasion when they have no clear conception of occasions. If they are to write well, their minds must pass through a long period of preparation. They must have practice, for they must gain immediate skill, and their entire intellectual life must be quickened to receive the results of reading. But they must remember what they read. We cannot control every pupil's environment so that he will hear only good speech; but we can so fill his memory with good literature that it will never cease to echo and re-echo through his consciousness.

These, it may be said, are very matter-of-fact suggestions. They are. I have already explained that French teachers are not much given to chasing novel or whimsical methods. And a study of their schools will convince almost any American that one of our greatest educational needs is larger faithfulness to a few well-proved practices. We have a national habit of taking up a subject or idea, proving its absolute importance, and then immediately forgetting all about it. Ten years ago, for example, everybody discussed correlation of studies. Every assembly of teachers, from the state association to the township monthly institute or village fortnightly meeting, resounded with discussions of

## 228 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

correlation. To-day correlation is just as important as it was ten years ago — and in most respects it is quite as far from being realized — yet comparatively little is said upon the subject. It has given way in turn to vocational guidance, Montessori education, and sex hygiene. In the field of English, the same unrest has been evident. Oral composition, commercial correspondence, dramatization, learning to write by learning to think, have in turn received large attention. As if all of them were not of great and undiminishing importance! Truly, our task is not to discover the wholly new and untried, but to be patient in carrying reasonable and accepted methods into practice.

We must, too, be insistent in our demands for work of good quality. I would not minimize the importance of quality in other subjects, but in the study of the mother tongue it is peculiarly essential. The native language differs from other subjects in that the pupil always has a fund of knowledge about it that he has acquired more or less unconsciously. He must, then, be brought into an alert, open state of mind before he has any real consciousness of the language or can have a very definite feeling for its correct or effective use. The French boy, it is well known, has more to do in school than the American boy has, and his work is more exacting in character. As a result, he is kept in a state of activity that holds his mind open to impression. Now by compressing our course of study, as I have already pointed out, and by insistence upon work of high quality, we shall do much to bring our pupils into a similar state. A boy may go along very pleasantly from year to year and avoid making egregious blunders in either speech or writing; yet because he is not thoroughly awakened, he may never quite gain a real working mastery over his mother tongue. Whether he likes the experience or not, he must be brought

up to white heat in his mental activities so that he may become impressionable to things that are subtle or evasive in character, and conscious to some extent of his everyday mental life. His mind must have some genuine discipline.

### C. IN FINDING AND PREPARING TEACHERS

Nothing, however, in the nature of readjustment or reëmpHASIS in our school organization or classroom method will result in the highest possible good unless we have a greater number of efficient teachers. It is remarkable and regrettable that the teacher, the center and life of the school, has received so little of our thought. I do not speak disparagingly of our normal schools, for they are doing a valuable service in spite of the criticism that has been heaped upon them; I refer rather to the passive attitude of school officers and teachers themselves. Go to our educational meetings, read the proceedings of our national and state associations, or glance through our leading educational journals, and how much is found about the questions of discovering and preparing good teachers? All other subjects — deficients, fine art, agriculture, high school fraternities, — are treated with spirit and completeness; but the one topic that is more important than any other is well-nigh forgotten. And when one visits our schools and colleges, one can see that this attitude is carried into practice. We have the spectacle of quarter-million-dollar high school buildings "manned" in the main by eight-hundred-dollar teachers; we have universities with ten-million-dollar "plants" operated to a surprising extent by young assistants and instructors who receive but little more than the teachers in the high school. Our interest in the machinery, the trappings of education — the part that can be pointed out easily and impressively to patrons of learning — has

been so great that we have in large measure lost sight of the teacher.

From this condition, English has probably been the greatest sufferer. To begin with, the more "practical" subjects demand and receive first attention; their significance is immediately recognized. Secondly, it seems to be taken for granted in many school communities that since everybody speaks the English language, anybody ought to be able to teach it. Superintendents and principals frequently will go to a college, university, or normal school, choose a man who will be a good football or basketball coach, and without making any inquiry whatever concerning his record in English, will put him in charge of classes in composition and literature. Too often it happens that he is disgracefully poor in English, and through his weakness neutralizes all the good effect of the other English teachers in the school. Of course, in our present mania for highly organized athletics, all departments in our schools suffer in this manner; but the supposed ease with which anyone may be made into a teacher of the mother tongue causes English to suffer out of proportion.

We must, then, be more zealous in finding young men and women who will develop into good teachers. In some definite manner we must help the indifferent superintendent to see that he ought not to foist an inadequately trained college graduate upon the high-school department of English, and we must make him feel that he should not rely upon chance in getting new teachers when vacancies occur. Why should he not have at all times a list of good candidates from which he might make selection? And then everyone who teaches English must devote more thought to means of encouraging promising boys and girls to go into the English field. When a pupil reveals unusual ability in the mother

tongue, we should not sit idly by while he decides to take up the teaching of German or botany or mathematics. We must be active in finding promising recruits, so that school officers may not justly complain of a dearth of material.

Once promising candidates are found, they must have sufficient academic and professional training. This declaration, I am aware, may seem quite unnecessary. Yet if we bear in mind the professional qualifications of a large per cent of our rural, village, or even city teachers, we can see that we are far removed from an ideal condition. As was pointed out in the preceding chapter, many of our teachers are as well trained as the best that are to be found anywhere; but there are so many with wholly inadequate preparation that they make the average very low.<sup>1</sup>

Aside from the perfectly obvious fact that more thorough preparation would contribute to sounder scholarship generally, there are specific reasons why the English teacher should be well trained. First, the mother tongue is probably influenced more than any other subject by the general tone of the teaching force. Anyone who enters a schoolroom with narrow or meagre preparation is almost certain to reveal his weakness in his speech and writing. On the other hand, the teacher of the mother tongue profits peculiarly by a period of training in a normal school, college, or university, since he is not merely receiving systematic instruction, but, through daily contact with other minds in the educated community, is having his instruction driven home. In this double process he not only learns better what to present in the classroom, but remedies weaknesses in his own speech that would be dangerous to the language conscience of his pupils. Secondly, because of the inclusiveness of the field of English and the interrelation of the different parts

<sup>1</sup> See the comparison with the French teacher in Chapter VII.

of the field, the subject gains almost immeasurably through being presented by one who has a deep background of knowledge. A teacher may be a slave to a textbook and still be of some service to his pupils, but if he is really to illumine his subject, he must have breadth of knowledge of his own.

Especially in the training of elementary teachers should our efforts be in the direction of greater thoroughness. The per cent of American teachers of the lower grades who have had no training beyond the high school is distressingly large; and the number of those who have completed only the common-school course is much larger than is generally supposed. Some have attended a normal school for the short summer term, but many have not had even this opportunity for professional improvement. Now, if we but reflect upon the scope of the field of English and the daily questions that require more than elementary knowledge on the part of the teacher, we cannot fail to see the necessity of more thorough training. Why should a man or woman who teaches ten-year-old boys be less thoroughly prepared than the one who instructs high-school pupils? In truth, the problems of the former sometimes require the wider knowledge. But however that may be, the elementary teachers should have a large fund of knowledge beyond the immediate routine demands of the class. The limits fixed by the course of study should be conveniences, not barriers beyond which the class should never venture. If, however, the pupils are to catch glimpses of a world larger than the textbook or classroom, the teacher must be able to help them. He should have a wide acquaintance with literature, the ability to write with some degree of skill, and, above all else, enough systematic knowledge of his subject to enable him to know his own weaknesses, to judge between arbitrary

rule and established principle, to know when to accept the new and when to hold fast to the old. He must have enough knowledge, and he must have it well enough organized, to enable him to exercise the power of selection, whether in choosing material for his pupils to read, or in discussing a poem, or in criticising a dictation or composition. Training, to be sure, will not make a teacher effective if he has poor native ability; but given teaching intelligence, training of this broad character will enable one to pass from the rank of the ordinary teacher to that of the teacher whose work is immediately recognized because of its depth and permanence.

There is nothing ultra-idealistic in the nature of the conviction that better training is within the range of possibility. Men whose chief concern in life is business or politics will help to bring about the change if they are only made to see the necessity of it. And the higher standards would soon cease to excite comment; they would be taken for granted. Their necessity would be accepted just as we have accepted the necessity of automobiles, interurban cars, and wireless telegraphy. A few years ago when one state passed a law which made the minimum requirement for any kind of teacher a four-year course in a recognized high school, plus at least twelve weeks of professional training in a normal school or department of education in a college or university, it was said freely that schools would soon be without teachers. Yet at the present time the wisdom of the change is scarcely questioned by anyone, and candidates for the profession prepare to meet the requirement very much as if it had always existed. All that is necessary in bringing about such desirable changes is a little concentrated effort.

Any consideration of training for advanced teaching brings us face to face immediately with the whole problem

of graduate study in our universities. For several years it has been customary, whenever discussion has arisen concerning advanced training in English, to criticise our graduate schools roundly, denounce the study of "philology", and close by proclaiming the case hopeless. Some of this criticism has been wholly without justification, much of it has been well-founded, and most of it has been offered in a spirit that has contributed nothing toward an unprejudiced study of the question. It is true beyond denial that much of the graduate work in English in American universities during the past ten or twenty years, especially that leading directly to the Ph.D. degree, has not helped greatly to spread the gospel of good writing. Much of the study bears only a remote relation to the work of the high schools, normal schools, and colleges, it is not always liberalizing in the sense that corresponding study in history, economics, or philosophy is liberalizing, and the student who carries his work as far as the Ph.D. degree is in serious danger of being wholly unfitted in attitude for taking up the kind of work that he is almost certain to be called upon to do as soon as he is ready to teach. When he leaves the university he is likely to express hearty contempt for undergraduates, to scoff at pedagogical principle as so much useless flummery, to regard the offering of graduate courses and the carrying on of research as the only real heaven in which it is possible to "make a contribution," and, partly as a result of this last conviction, to confuse fruitful scholarly investigation with the least interesting devices of the investigator's method.

On the other hand, the close specialization that has characterized the work required for the Ph.D. degree has had one pronounced and usually forgotten beneficial effect: it has emphasized the necessity of greater accuracy in the

teaching of the mother tongue. This, in our new country, is a service that ought not to be unappreciated. It is frequently said with some justification that too many of our English scholars have lost sight of the beauty and richness of their subject and have become narrow-minded mediæval source-hunters. Yet when one bears in mind the flimsy, unsubstantial "appreciation" that stands at the other extreme, one is constrained to say that if we must choose between the two, we had better take the source-hunting. It has at least the virtue of requiring accuracy, and if a man pursues it, he will in any event develop solidity of fibre. While the case, then, against the universities has been a real one, it has not been wholly one-sided; and it is not one that will be settled by bitter denunciation or purely negative criticism.

The most urgent need in university study of English to-day is a graduate course covering three or even four years that does not demand research primarily, or even largely. As our work is now carried on, a graduate student must stop with the A.M. degree, after one or two years of study, or he must give himself over to specialization in his field and to research leading to the Ph.D. If he chooses to spend one or two years in the graduate school after he receives his A.M., but does not choose to become a candidate for the Ph.D., he suffers the humiliation either of being looked upon as one who has fallen short, or of being regarded as having no definite purpose. We ought to have a university course of study in the mother tongue that would correspond in certain respects to the work carried on in preparation for the *agrégation* in France. It would represent a deep foundation in the study of languages and a broad but accurate knowledge of the literature of the mother tongue. The candidate would devote himself to regular

## 236 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

advanced courses in his native language and literature, to wide reading, and to some intensive study. But he would not focus his chief effort upon a special field in which he is supposed to become competent "to advance knowledge." When he has finished his course he would submit himself to an examination covering thoroughly his entire field of study. As a fitting degree for this course, the Litt.D. might be transferred from the field of honorary degrees. The Ph.D. could then be kept as a mark of distinction for men who have special ability in research.

This readjustment in graduate study would help much in giving to English teaching the balance and unity of spirit which it deeply needs. To-day the student in the university, the college, or even the high school, is tugged back and forth by different teachers until the field of English seems to him a mystic maze. One teacher thinks the only work deserving the name is based upon scientific language study; his successor the next year, or perhaps one of his colleagues at the very time, believes only in æsthetic interpretation; another sees value only in the study of poetry; the next thinks it sacrilege to attempt to teach poetry; and possibly the next is some lost meteoric soul in the educational heavens who doubts whether language, literature, or anything else can really be taught at all. Is it surprising when candidates for the profession of teaching have been submitted to treatment of this sort that our departments of English are so wholly lacking in unity of spirit? Coöperation is quite impossible, because the different members are going in different directions — or at least they think they are. Now, if teachers were trained to look out upon their field of knowledge without being permitted to imagine that all of it centered about one very small and possibly obscure corner, this heterogeneous character of our departments of English

would sooner or later become less pronounced. Lovers of nineteenth century poetry would cease to scoff at the colleague who found interest in Old or Middle English; and it is scarcely too much to believe that many another teacher might cease to look upon all courses in composition or modern literature as only so much penance that must be done before one may be admitted to "the glorified life of giving graduate courses."

#### D. IN THE TEACHER'S POSITION

As soon as there is a more distinct general movement toward the better preparation of teachers of English, the time will be doubly ripe for demanding better working conditions and better salaries. As a matter of simple reasoning, what kind of result may be expected when a man or woman is obliged to go from school to school every four or five years searching for a new position, is required to teach from twenty-five to thirty-two hours a week in addition to committee work and the important labor of reading manuscript, and for the sacrifice is paid eight hundred, six hundred, or five hundred dollars a year, with the certain prospect of being dropped from the pay-roll at a relatively early age? These are the present conditions in schools outside the largest centers of population. In the higher institutions, conditions are usually better,<sup>1</sup> although in many colleges that have small financial support, and in many of the universities that are having the most rapid growth, the

<sup>1</sup> See the various editions of the Hopkins Report on *The Cost and Labor of English Teaching*. If there is a teacher of English in America who has not seen this report, he should procure a copy at once and study it. It was originally published by the University of Kansas, but has been reprinted many times elsewhere. A copy may be had by sending five cents to the Department of Journalism Press, University of Kansas.

## 238 HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE

"English situation" is still quite "impossible." The necessity of reform is so general and so urgent that it scarcely requires discussion.

The teacher of English must receive a larger salary. "Easy enough to say," some one usually exclaims when such a declaration is made, "but where is the money to come from?" Now in all institutions supported by public tax, is it not just as much a part of the teacher's legitimate business to find this out, as it is to improve the public welfare through purely professional skill? The chief difficulty in the past has been, I believe, that teachers, because of their short tenure of service in a community or their short careers in the profession, have given very little thought toward improving the conditions under which they are asked to work. How many who read this paragraph know what the tax levy for educational purposes was in their city or county or township last year? How much was it for the support of political officeholders? Why does it always seem difficult to secure money that is to be paid to teachers in salaries, but easy to secure it for new buildings? How many have talked with their county or city officials about the importance of quality in school work, and the relation of quality to the salaries paid to teachers. How many know how their salaries compare with the wages of skilled and unskilled laborers in the community?<sup>1</sup> Or how many know how their salaries compare with the salaries received by

<sup>1</sup> The Baltimore and Ohio, New York Central, Pennsylvania, Lackawanna, and Big Four Railroad Companies reported the following average wages of employees in 1913:

	Passenger Conductor	Passenger Brakeman	Freight Conductor	Freight Brakeman
Baltimore and Ohio .....	\$1574.	\$996.75	\$1219.15	\$834.95
New York Central .....	1626.79	1017.18	1322.60	877.95
Pennsylvania .....	1636.	961.75	1326.55	901.72
Lackawanna .....	1636.69	954.41	1296.78	864.94
Big Four .....	1767.74	1027.57	1313.50	859.80

teachers in other departments of the same school?<sup>1</sup> No plea for the righteousness of paying respectable salaries will have any weight until the teachers support their cause with definite knowledge. When men and women make clear to school officials that they are teaching an all-important subject, that they want to teach it as well as it can be taught, that they are working overtime and receiving half pay, and that they know the money for making the necessary changes is to be had, a new order will be brought into existence. Incidentally, everyone will hold the English teacher in greater respect; and he will have infinitely greater respect for himself.

#### IV. THE FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTER OF OUR NEEDS

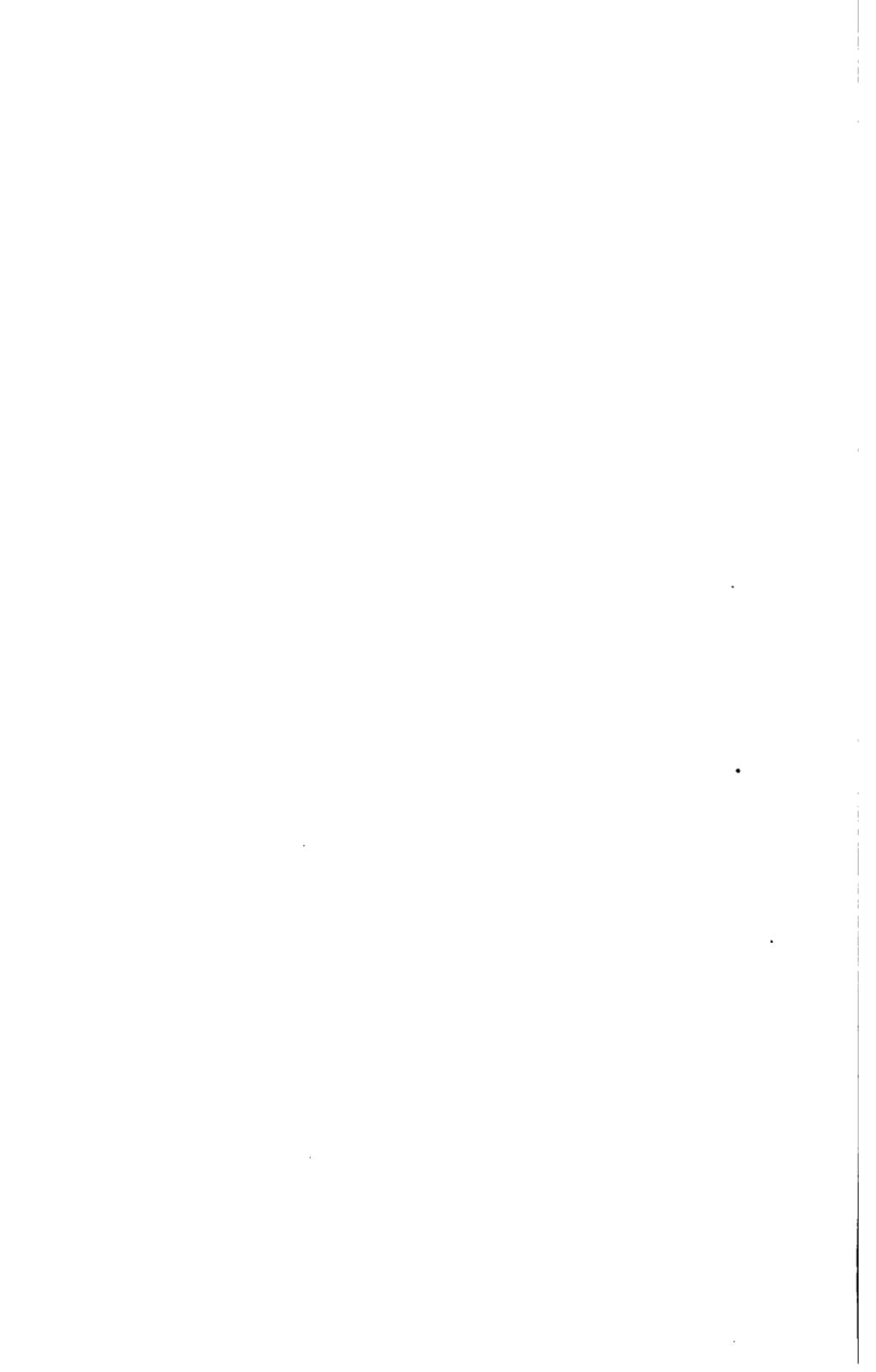
To be sure, the changes I have suggested in this chapter are not the only ones that might grow logically from a study of what the French are doing. A great many others, either remote in their bearing or minor in their importance, might well claim attention. Some one may wonder why I have not said more about the possible influence of separate education on pupils' work; some one else may be disappointed because I have not traced the influence of French home discipline as it is revealed in the written work of pupils; and still others may regret that I have not spoken at greater length concerning the devices of individual teachers. These matters have their significance. But our chief needs are immediate in their bearing, and they are fundamental in character. (In so far as the mother tongue is concerned, the

<sup>1</sup> In some high schools, the teacher of manual training, I have found, receives almost twice as large a salary as the teacher of English. In one large school that occupies a building which cost \$225,000, the manual training teacher two years ago received \$1600, the head of the department of English, \$810.

essential difference between our procedure and that of the French is that the French have viewed their problem in the large and have then determined at the outset the chief things essential to its solution, while we have given our attention to small matters that are of consequence only after general lines of procedure — which we have not adopted — have been agreed upon. We have, too frequently, taxed our ingenuity to the utmost to develop methods of doing work that, in most instances, should not be done at all. We must approach from the other side. Devices that have to do with small matters will avail little so long as they must be used as a system of correctives in an educational scheme that is faulty in larger, more fundamental ways. When we can have readjustments in school organization that will make the effective teaching of English possible; when we have taken up our work in the community with greater zeal; when we have learned better how to guide pupils in preparing to write, so that writing will not seem unnatural and unrelated to other activities; when we have reëstablished ourselves on a sound basis of grammar and have turned to the early reading and memorizing of good literature; when teachers are more thoroughly trained, and when teachers and school officials alike are content to pursue methods that are sound, whether or not they are easy or novel; — when we have carefully readjusted ourselves in these respects, we may hope to make more rapid progress in helping our boys and girls to write well. We can scarcely hope for it before.



## **APPENDIX**



## APPENDIX

### (A) BIBLIOGRAPHY

INASMUCH as the preceding pages are so very largely the result of first-hand observation, I make no pretense of offering a comprehensive bibliography. If, however, anyone wishes to carry out an investigation of his own, he will find the following books and articles valuable in making preparation.

#### PRINTED IN FRENCH

*Annales du Baccalauréat.* Librairie Vuibert.

*Instructions concernant les programmes de l'Enseignement secondaire.* 274 pages (in 1912). These directions and suggestions are, of course, revised from time to time. Librairie Charles Delagrave.

*Plan d'études et programmes de l'Enseignement secondaire: des Garçons; des Filles.* Librairie Vuibert.

*Plan d'études et programmes d'enseignement des Écoles primaires.*

- (a) *Écoles maternelles.*
- (b) *Écoles primaires élémentaires.*
- (c) *Écoles primaires supérieures.*
- (d) *Écoles normales d'instituteurs.*
- (e) *Écoles normales d'institutrices.*

Librairie Delalain Frères.

---

J. Bezard: *La classe de français.* Journal d'un Professeur dans une division de Seconde C (Latin-Sciences). 320 pages. Librairie Vuibert.

*De la Méthode littéraire.* Journal d'un Professeur dans une classe de Première. 738 pages. Librairie Vuibert.

*Comment apprendre le latin à nos fils.* 424 pages. Librairie Vuibert.

- E. Bouchendhomme: *De l'Enseignement du français.* 211 pages. Librairie Armand Colin.
- Brucker et Caustier: *L'Enseignement des leçons de choses.* 189 pages. Conférences du Musée pédagogique, 1912. Imprimerie Nationale.
- F. Brunot: *L'Enseignement de la Langue française.* 192 pages. Librairie Armand Colin.
- Cellerier et Dugas: *L'Année pédagogique.* Librairie Felix Alcan. An annual review of education and educational articles.
- E. Delalain: *Annuaire de l'Instruction publique.* Librairie Delalain Frères. A classified directory of all the officers of instruction and teachers in the universities, normal schools, special schools, and secondary schools of France. It includes also the officers of instruction, but not the teachers, of the upper primary schools. A glance through the volume gives one a good notion of the system in French education.
- A. Grazier: *Traité d'explication française.* 218 pages. Librairie Belin Frères.
- G. Lanson, G. Rudler, A. Cahen, et J. Bezard: *L'Enseignement du français.* 197 pages. Conférences du Musée Pédagogique, 1909. Imprimerie Nationale. This book is a report of one of the round-table meetings held from time to time at the Musée Pédagogique in Paris.
- M. Michel: *Notions élémentaires de Grammaire historique.* 146 pages. Librairie Belin Frères.
- Mutelet et Dangueuger: *Programmes officiels des Écoles primaires élémentaires: interprétation, divisions, emplois du temps.* 268 pages. Librairie Hachette et Cie.
- L. Poitrial: *Comment enseigner le français à l'École primaire.* 142 pages. Librairie Charles Delagrave.
- Ribot Commission (The): *Enquête sur l'enseignement secondaire.* Imprimerie Nationale. See the testimony that deals with the teaching of languages.
- G. Rudler: *L'Explication française.* 249 pages. Librairie Armand Colin.

H. Vuibert: *Annuaire de la Jeunesse*. Librairie Vuibert. This annual volume is indispensable to one who wishes to be informed on French education from year to year. The issue for 1913 contains 1196 pages of sound information.

A. Wissemans: *Nouveau Code de l'Instruction primaire*. 924 pages (in 1912). Librairie Hachette et Cie. This volume, known as the *Code Pickard*, is a classified arrangement of all national laws that touch the primary school system.

*Code de l'Enseignement secondaire*. 419 pages (in 1910). Librairie Hachette et Cie.

#### PRINTED IN ENGLISH

English Board of Education: *Special Reports on Educational Subjects*. Vol. 24. 554 pages. This volume is devoted to secondary and university education in France. It contains much information about French secondary schools, including a substantial article on The Teaching of the Mother Tongue, by Arthur H. Hope. Some of the material for the report (not, however, for any part of Mr. Hope's article) was secured as early as 1898 and 1900, so that it is now a little out of date. The volume is, however, valuable as a means of comparing English and French education. Wyman and Sons, London. 1911.

Frederic Ernest Farrington: *The Public Primary School System of France*. 303 pages. Published by Columbia University. 1906.

*French Secondary Schools*. 450 pages. Longmans, Green, and Company. 1910.

These two books give excellent accounts of the development and present organization of the French primary and secondary school systems.

P. J. Hartog: *The Writing of English*. 164 pages. This small book includes an account of some visits that the author made to French classes in the mother tongue several years ago. The Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1907.

Karl Young: *Composition-Teaching in French Lycées*. English Journal, June, 1912.

**(B) THE MOTHER TONGUE IN THE PRIMARY NORMAL SCHOOL<sup>1</sup>**

First year .....	five hours a week
Second year .....	four hours a week
Third year .....	four hours a week

**I. READING AND RECITATION**

(Three hours a week in the first and second years [two hours a week in the third year].)

The reading aloud of classical works. The explication of the chief pieces; the memorization of the most important passages.

Personal readings indicated by the instructor or chosen under his direction by the student.

**II. GRAMMAR AND GRAMMATICAL EXERCISES**

(One hour a week in the first year [and the third year].)

Analytical study of grammar, illuminated by some essential notions of historical grammar.

Exercises, chiefly oral, in orthography and vocabulary, and in grammatical and logical analysis.

**III. EXERCISES IN COMPOSITION**

(One hour a week each year.)

**PROGRAMME**

*First Year*

Readings to form the literary taste of the students and to interest them in problems of conduct. For example:

Corneille: *Le Cid*. — *Horace*. — *Cinna*. — *Polyeucte*.

Racine: *Andromaque*. — *Briannicus*. — *Athalie*.

Molière: *L'Avare*. — *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*.

La Fontaine: Several fables.

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the programmes of study.

Boileau: Selections from the *Satires* and *l'Art poétique*.

Bossuet: *Oraison funèbre d'Henriette d'Angleterre*. — *Sermon sur la mort*. — *Méditation sur la brièveté de la vie*.

Pascal: Several thoughts. *Les deux infinis*.

La Bruyère: Portraits and meditations (Chapters de *l'Homme* and des *Jugements*, du *Mérite personnel*, selections).

M<sup>me</sup> de Sévigné: Selected letters.

Lamartine: *Milly*. — *La Mort de Socrate*.

Victor Hugo: *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*. — *Ceux qui vivent ce sont ceux qui luttent*. — *Ultima verba*. — *Le mariage de Roland*. — *Les Pauvres Gens*.

Selected *Moralistes* of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

Nisard, Sainte-Beuve: Some pages of criticism on Bossuet, Boileau, Racine, and Molière.

### *Second Year*

(This list is given, as the preceding, by way of suggestion.)

1. Middle Ages:

*Chanson de Roland*.

Selections from *Mystères*.

*L'avocat Pathelin*.

The chronicle writers and especially Joinville.

Villon: *Ballade des pendus*.

2. Renaissance:

(a) Prose writers.

Rabelais: Selections.

Amyot: Selections.

Montaigne: *Lettre sur la mort de la Boëtie*. — Selections on friendship.

(b) Poets.

Some poems by Marot, Ronsard, and du Bellay.

3. The seventeenth century:

La Rochefoucauld: *Maximes*.

La Bruyère: *The Caractères*.

La Fontaine: Several fables.

Molière: *Le Misanthrope*.

Boileau: *Art poétique*, Canto IV (le Poète honnête homme).  
Selected letters of the century.

4. The eighteenth century:

Montesquieu: *Considerations*: The comparison of Rome and Carthage (Compare with Bossuet). — *Esprit des lois*: Chapter XXV, § 5 and 13. Chapter XIX, § 5.

Voltaire: Selected letters. — *Siècle de Louis XIV* (Chapter XXXII). Selections from his stories and from his *Dictionnaire philosophique*.

Rousseau: *Lettre à Voltaire sur le désastre de Lisbonne*. — *Lettre à d'Allemont sur les spectacles* (selections). *Emile*: Books I, II (selections). — *Rêveries du Promeneur solitaire* (selections).

Diderot: Selections.

5. Revolution and nineteenth century:

Discourses or parts of discourses by Mirabeau, Vergniaud, Danton, Benjamin Constant, Royer-Collard, Lamartine, Thiers, Gambetta, J. Ferry.

Chateaubriand: Extracts from *Martyrs*, from *l'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, and from *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*.

A. Thierry: *Récits Mérovingiens* (the 4th). — *Dix ans d'Etudes historique* (selections).

Guizot: *Essais sur l'Histoire de France* (The fifth: *Essai sur la Féodalité*).

Michelet: *Histoire de France* (fifteenth century) and extracts from Volume I of the *Histoire de la Révolution*.

Lamartine: *Jocelyn*: ninth époque (*Les Laboureurs*).

Hugo: *O souvenirs, printemps, aurore*. — *A Villequier*. — *L'expiation*. — *Lux*.

Musset: *La Nuit de Mai*.

Vigny: *La Mort du Loup*. — *La Bouteille à la Mer*.

*Third Year*

Explication of texts .....	two hours a week
Composition .....	one hour a week
Grammar .....	one hour a week

## EXPLICATION OF TEXTS

*First part.* — Readings and comments designed to illuminate the following subjects:

Classic tragedy and romantic drama.

Comedy since Molière: Marivaux, Beaumarchais, E. Augier.

The transformation of history in the nineteenth century:  
from Augustin Thierry to Fustel de Coulanges.

The novel in the nineteenth century: Hugo, Sand, Balzac,  
Flaubert, Zola, Daudet.

The principal masters of literary criticism in the nineteenth  
century: Nisard, Sainte-Beuve, Taine.

The great modern poets: Chénier, Lamartine, Hugo, Musset,  
Vigny, Leconte de Lisle, Sully-Prudhomme.

*Second part.* — Reading of the masterpieces of ancient literature  
and of modern foreign literature.

*The Iliad* (Books VI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV).

*The Odyssey* (Books VI, XI, XXIII).

Æschylus: *The Persians*.

Sophocles: *Oedipus Rex*. — *Philoctetes*.

Euripides: *Iphigenia at Aulis*. — *Alcestis*.

Aristophanes: *The Wasps* (selections).

Demosthenes: *Philippics* (the first).

Plutarch: Two of the Lives (in comparison).

Plato: *Apology*. — The end of *Phaedo*. — *Crito*.

Lucretius: *On the Nature of Things*.

Vergil: *Georgics* (episodes). — *The Aeneid* (Books VI and IX).

Cæsar: *The War against the Gauls*. Book VI. The cus-  
toms of the Gauls.

Tacitus: *Annals*: Book VI. Death of Tiberius. — Book  
XVI. Nero on the theatre.

Shakespeare: *Macbeth*. — *Richard III*. — *Hamlet*.

Goethe: *Iphigenie*.

Schiller: *William Tell*.

Dante: *The Divine Comedy: Inferno* (Cantos I, II, III, VII, XXXIV, XXXVI).

Cervantes: *Don Quixote* (selections).

*Third part.* — Selection of readings for the popular lectures.<sup>1</sup>

#### PEDAGOGICAL DIRECTIONS

The instructions which have been given relative to the teaching of French in the first and second years apply for the most part to the exercises of the third year. It is necessary, however, that the personal work of the students increase steadily and that the part of the instructor be diminished and modified. For this reason, only two classes a week in reading are maintained in the third year, — classes that sometimes require of the student four or five hours of preparation [for each]. The instructor ought less and less to explain or even to question. It is the student who ought to speak in a continuous manner, so that the instructor may form an opinion of his knowledge, his method, and the sureness of his judgment, and give him efficacious counsel. The most delicate task from the very first is to encourage the student: he must express his own thought; there cannot be any development or even intellectual honesty, except at this price. It is necessary, then, to encourage the student, to try to discover what there is of value in his thought, and make use of this in showing him by what effort he could have given his work a greater value. And, on the other hand, the student must be helped in governing his impressions, in getting away from pre-conceived opinions and narrowness, in judging with good sense and taste. The peril of teachers as well as students is always among fixed formulas, cut-and-dried judgments, puerile impressions, or vain dogmatism.

At the beginning of the year, the instructor will do well not to give more than twenty minutes to each outline or to each reading explained; the student should be obliged to proportion his time for the better confirming and fixing of his thought.

<sup>1</sup> These are discussed in a later paragraph.

*Literary Readings*

The programme permits of two kinds of readings:

The first are designed to complete the knowledge that the students already have of French literature. These readings will bring to mind again certain works that are the expression of an historical movement, either because they are explained by it, or because they have helped to create it.

The others are drawn from the masterpieces of ancient and modern foreign literatures,—from the works about which Sainte-Beuve said, "No one is a man who does not know them." It has not seemed right to deprive future teachers of readings which, for being done in translations, are none the less sources of pure enjoyment and of inspiration to a more complete and a higher human nature.

These two kinds of works need not be studied in the same manner, but both of them call for an effort to get out of oneself, to put oneself in another time, in another society, in conditions which are new for us; and it is this effort that is, strictly speaking, educative. When one perceives that he is not so much of a stranger as he had at first thought to the profound ways of thinking, of feeling, and living that are revealed to him, he is at the same time both invigorated and enriched. It is well that the student-teachers have this double experience. The instructor who aids them in enjoying it has well performed his duty, it matters little what method he has followed: it is good assuredly.

*Popular Readings*

Concerning the readings for the popular lectures, one will do well to consult the article by Sainte-Beuve (*Causeries du Lundi*), the pamphlet by Monsieur Bouchor, and the collection of readings published by the Philotechnical Association. One will see how to choose the readings and how to present them. In the course of the third year, groups of students will have practice in giving readings (recreation for the evening, afternoon, or Sunday) to their fellow students. Each third-year student will have

charge, in his turn, of organizing these meetings, of reading the works, and of supplying in brief explanations the necessary setting and connection of the scenes or the parts read. In the class in literature the instructor will discuss questions of choice, methods of presentation, and will prepare, with students, a list of works, both prose selections and poems, suitable for popular readings.

It would be worth while to invite the oldest pupils in the practice-school and their parents to attend these student readings.

#### *Composition*

The pupils of the third year should each fortnight prepare a composition, but it may be on a subject drawn from literature, history, ethics, or education. It will, naturally, be corrected by the instructor best fitted for the task. It is not indispensable that all the pupils treat the same subject; it is preferable that the instructor often propose several to choose from, and leave the student free to treat one within a given time. It is sufficient that each composition be submitted on the day appointed.

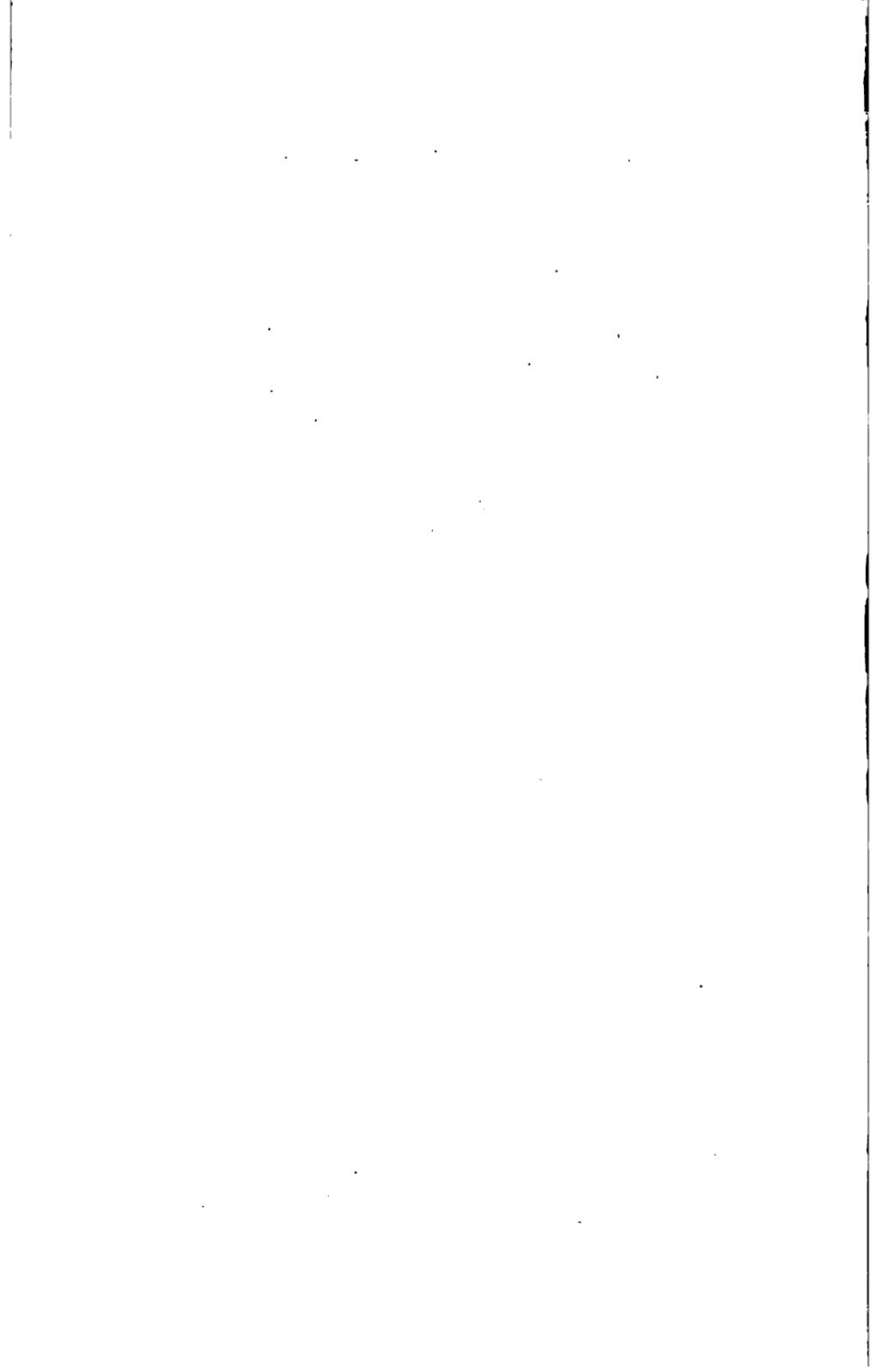
#### *Grammar and Reading*

Here it is a question of exercises that are suited to the primary school. It is not expected that the instructor make a systematic, complete course in grammar. He should not forget, either, that in the primary school "one must learn grammar through the language and not the language through the grammar." The instructor will choose in the programmes of the primary schools a certain number of subjects that he will have the student-teachers treat, either in the form of outlines, or in the form of exercises of which they should justify the choice, the preparation, and the correction. The following should be treated:

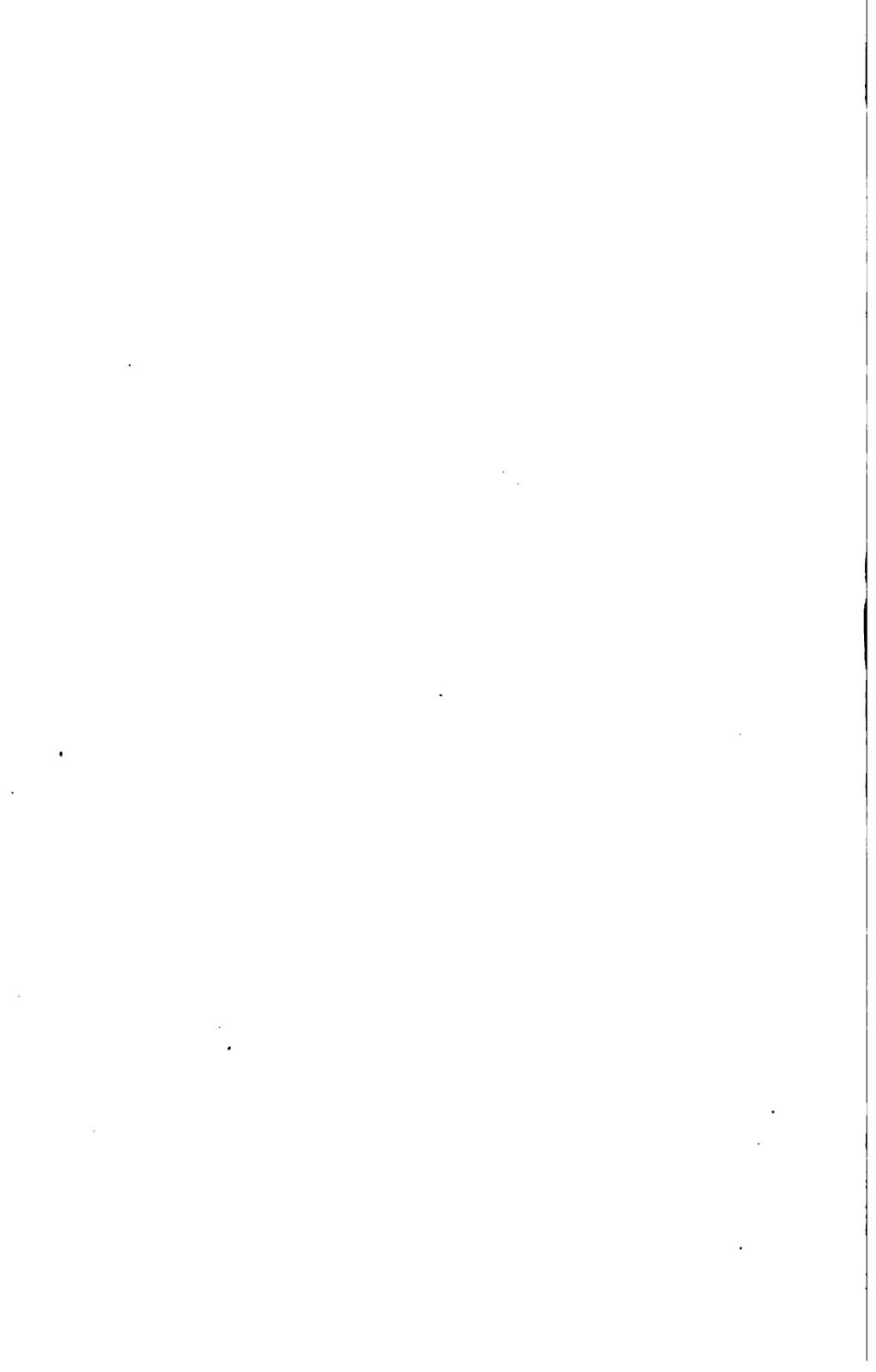
(1) Language exercises; (2) the principal rules of agreement among words; (3) the principal rules of construction of sentences; (4) the formation and derivation of words; (5) grammatical analysis; (6) logical analysis; (7) composition.

In a second part of the recitation the instructor will direct the making of such readings, with explanations, as are suited to the primary school.

One must not believe that this exercise is without import simply because the pupils for whom it is designed are absent; one can well discuss the choice of the piece, its length, the method of reading and explaining, the expressions that it is worth while to speak about because of the audience to which one will address himself, etc. To require the student-teacher to read a simple piece well, and then to summarize the meaning, and then to indicate the development, is a useful exercise that may give rise to some criticisms as much more efficacious as they are immediate. The student-teacher who can best imagine what a pupil would say or ought to say is the one who will later guide the pupil best.



## **INDEX**



## INDEX

- Ability of the French teacher to question, 199.
- Académies, area of, 11. number of, 11.
- Adjustments necessary to language tradition in America, 212.
- Agrégation, 180.
- Arrêté of July, 1910, 96.
- Baccalaureate examination, 71, 179, 181. subjects for composition in, 71.
- Bachelier, 179, 182.
- Bezard, J., 129.
- Bibliography, 243.
- Bonaparte, Napoleon, quoted, 74.
- Brevet, élémentaire, 176. supérieur, 176.
- Brunot, Ferdinand, quoted, 108.
- Certificat d'aptitude pédagogique, 177.
- Chateaubriand, François René de, quoted, 74.
- Chénier, André, quoted, 122.
- Class in French school, explained, 16.
- Class periods in the mother tongue, internal arrangement of, 100.
- Composition, the French attitude toward, 46.
- Composition and literature, 225.
- Compositions (see also Themes), subjects for, 66. in the baccalaureate examination, 71.
- Compression of American school course recommended, 215.
- Conscientiousness of the French teacher, 197.
- Contrast, the basis of word-teaching, 54.
- Course, in the primary schools, 14. in the secondary schools, 14.
- Courses of study in the mother tongue, unity of, 15.
- Criticism of themes, constructive, 82. ideals in, 79. methods employed in, 81. oral, 81. spirit of, 83.
- Daudet, Alphonse, quoted, 59, 103.
- Département, division of an académie, 188.
- Dictation, accuracy of French pupils in taking, 60. specimens of, 59, 60. value of, dwelt upon by French teachers, 57. value of, in teaching spelling, 61.
- Direct method in the teaching of foreign languages, 163. accepted in 1828, 163. adopted for the modern languages in 1902, 162. applied to the teaching of English in France, 163. efficacy of, 169. explication of texts in, 167. grammar in, 164. influence of on the mother tongue, 170.

- Directeur, directrice, 187.  
 Directeurs (de l'Enseignement), 11.  
 Distribution of exercises in writing, 46, 67, 219.  
 Dual organization of the French schools, 12.
- École normale supérieure, 181, 182.  
 English classics, importance of teaching in America, 224.
- Enthusiasm of the French teacher, 198.
- Examination for the baccalaureate, 179, 181.  
 per cent of successful applicants in, for 1912, 180.
- Explication of texts, characteristic comment in, 126.  
 example of, 129.  
 organization of ideas in, 125.  
 origin of, 123.  
 reading aloud in, 128.  
 value of, 148.  
 word-by-word knowledge required in, 124.
- Foreign languages, 155.
- France, Anatole, quoted, 68, 76.
- Franco-Prussian War, influence of on France, 6.
- Franklin, Benjamin, quoted, 105.
- Graduate study of English in American universities, 233.
- Grammar, close relation of to other work, 99.  
 complete passages of prose used in the study of, 103.  
 early beginning in the study of, 91.  
 historical, 110.  
 inductive method in, 107.  
 oral exercises in, 102.
- predominant purpose in teaching, 90.  
 sentence, the center of study in, 106.  
 simplification in the teaching of, 93.
- Grammatical nomenclature, simplified and unified, 96.
- Greek, 155, 159.
- Half-tints in Lamartine's images, 144.
- Historical grammar, 110.
- Hours devoted by teachers of the mother tongue to classroom work, 190.
- Hugo, Victor, quoted, 72, 74.
- Inductive method in teaching grammar, 107.
- Inspection, 188.  
 the value of, 189.
- Inspectors, 11.  
 general, 188.  
 of the académie, 188.  
 relation of to recteur, 188.  
 special primary, 188.
- Instituteur and professeur, 196.
- Instructions, quoted, 49, 90, 110, 150.
- Joubert, Joseph, quoted, 72.
- Lack of language tradition in America, 210.
- Lamartine, Alphonse de, quoted, 131, 133, 135, 147.
- Lamartine's diction, 139.
- Lamartinian rhythm and images, 141.
- Language tradition in France, 208.
- Latin, 155.  
 classroom method in, 156.

- close relation of to French, 159.  
 dominant purpose in teaching, 159.  
 early beginning in the study of, 156, 160.  
 Frenchman's attitude toward, 156.  
 per cent of pupils in lycée who take, 156.  
 taught by the teacher of French, 160.  
 Latin composition, 158.  
*L'Isolement* of Lamartine, 131.  
*Leçons de choses*, 51.  
 Licencié, 180.  
 Literature, 114.  
 Literature and theme-writing, 152.  
 Litt. D. degree, proposed as a degree in course, 236.  
 Lycée, compared with the primary school, 12.  
 Maeterlinck, Maurice, quoted, 72.  
 Material for themes, 63.  
   importance attached to, 63.  
   preparation of, 75.  
   sincerity the aim in assigning, 64.  
   specimen assignments of, 66.  
   teacher's assistance in the preparation of, 75.  
   threefold purpose in assigning, 64.  
 Memorizing, 225.  
 Memory exercises in reading and literature, 149.  
   value of, 151.  
 Minister of Public Instruction, 11.  
 Modern languages, 162.  
   status of before 1902, 162.  
   status of since 1902, 162.  
   direct method in the teaching of, 163.  
 Mother tongue in the primary normal school, 246.  
 Normal school, superior, 181.  
 Normal schools, in the primary system, 176.  
 Odéon theatre, 117.  
 Oral composition, as preparation for writing, 76.  
   and reading, 122.  
 Oral exercises in grammar, 102.  
 Pascal, Blaise, quoted, 137.  
 Pensions for teachers, 194.  
 Ph.D. degree, 234.  
 Preparation of teachers, 175.  
 Primaire, explained, 12.  
 Programmes,  
   for the primary schools, adopted in 1887, 14.  
   for the secondary schools, adopted in 1902, 14.  
 Programmes of study in the mother tongue, translation of, 18.  
 Proviseur, 187.  
 Quality, importance of in classroom work, 228.  
 Reading, 114.  
   activity in classes in, 118.  
   influence of the stage on, 117.  
   subject-matter of courses in, 114.  
   teacher's skill in, 121.  
   training in, in lower grades, 119.  
 Recteur, 11.  
   relation to inspectors, 188.  
 Residential indemnity of teachers, 192.  
 Respect of pupil for teacher in France, 203.

- Rhétorique supérieure, 183, 185.  
study of the mother tongue in, 183.
- Ribot Commission, 162.
- Rivarol, Antoine de, quoted, 5.
- Ronsard, Pierre de, quoted, 72.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, quoted, 70, 137.
- Sainte-Beuve, quoted, 69, 251.
- Salaries of teachers, 191.  
compared with American salaries, 193.
- Secondaire, explained, 12.
- Seriouaness of the French school, 205.
- Spelling, 61.
- Spirit of the French school, 203.
- Stael, Madame de, quoted, 72.
- Stagiaire, 177, 189.
- Superior normal school (see also École normale supérieure), 181, 182.
- Teacher, the French, 174.  
and his school, 203.  
foreign language in the training of, 176, 185.  
his ability to question, 199.  
his conscientiousness, 197.  
his enthusiasm, 198.  
his incidental teaching, 201.  
his life within the school, 187.  
his pension, 194.  
his position, 185.  
his promotions, 194.  
his relation to the inspectors, 188.  
his relation to the proviseur (or directeur) 187.  
his relation to the state, 185.  
his residential indemnity, 192.  
his salary, 191.
- his standing in the community, 186.  
maturity of, 202.  
preparation of, in the primary system, 175.  
preparation of, in the secondary system, 179.  
pupil's respect for, 203.  
training of in the mother tongue, 178, 181, 246.
- Teachers, finding and preparing in America, 229.  
position of in America, 237.
- Theme-correcting, overdeveloped 222.
- Themes, criticism of, 79.  
economy in the grading of, 84.  
grading of, 82.
- Theme-writing and the study of literature, 152.
- Thiers, Adolphe, quoted, 72.
- Training of teachers of the mother tongue in France, 178, 181.  
compared with training in America, 184.
- Vocabulary, 48.  
aim in lessons in, 49.  
enlarging and organizing the, 48.  
method of teaching, 50.  
scope of the lessons in, 55.  
study of, recommended, 220.  
value of lessons in, 56.
- Wages paid to American railroad employees, 238.
- Writing (see also Composition and Themes), 46.  
abundance of, in the French schools, 46, 87.  
and speaking in other subjects, 86.